

The Book of
THE THOUSAND NIGHTS
and ONE NIGHT

Rendered from the literal and complete
version of Dr. J. C. Mardrus;
and collated with other
sources; by

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THE TALE OF YOUNG NUR AND THE WARRIOR GIRL

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious king, that there was once, in the antiquity of time and the passage of the age and of the moment, an Egyptian merchant adventurer, whose name was Crown. He had passed his early life in voyaging on land and sea, among isles and through deserts, by shores known and unknown; and, in so doing, had affronted dangers and fatigues whose recital would have blanched the hair of little children. But, at the time of this tale, he had done with travel and lived happy and respected in his palace, seated upon his diwan, his brow girt with a turban of immaculate white muslin. He lacked nothing; for the rooms of his palace, his harem, his chests and presses were filled with sumptuous Mery garments, with silks of Hums and Balbek stuffs, with Damascene swords and with Baghdad brocades, Mosul gauze and Moorish mantles, and all the embroideries of India, in such profusion that no king of earth has known the like. Also he had many black and white slaves, Turkish mamelukes, concubines, eunuchs, blood horses and mules, Bactrian camels and racing dromedaries, Greek and Syrian boys, small Circassian girls, little Abyssinian eunuchs, and women from all lands. There is no

doubt that he was the most honoured merchant of his time.

But incomparably his richest and fairest possession was his fourteen year old son, who far surpassed the beauty of the moon upon her fourteenth night. Neither the cool of Springtime, the dancing branches of the ban, the rose in her bud, nor light shining through alabaster, could equal this boy, or his walking, or the tints upon his cheeks, or the stainless white of his body. Inspired by the child's beauty, a poet sang:

*Boys' crimson lips:
"But all your singing is insane,
You must not sing of us again."
So I obey and sit and sing
Of trees, of girls, of everything,
Inanely and in vain;
Till beauty takes me by the throat,
Lifting the theme, changing the note,
And I make maddest music for
Your flash of eyes declaring war,
The black musk spirt on white by your
Boy's crimson lips.*

Another sang of him:

*I came to a battle, a torment of red,
And asked of dying:
"Ah, what is the prize?"
Then one died sighing:
"A fair boy's eyes,"
And "Eyes" the smile of a dead man said.*

A third sang:

*When he came to see me and found me ill
"Oh, when did this happen?" the sweet boy cried.
"About the time when I heard on the sill
Your footstep," I replied.*

Another said:

*Moons with their pale flame,
And gazelles came.
"Bow down, gazelles, before this fawn,
And moons, before this dawn!"*

Yet another said:

*Save by his forehead and his hair
We tell not day and night apart;
Who then of his dark mole would dare
To say it mars the roses' art?
Or could the red anemone be fair
Without her heart?*

Another wrote of him also:

*Beauty's waters were made clear
When his eyes lay mirrored there;
So, fierce archers everywhere,
Let us sing, let us be glad
For eyes and arrows of my lad.
His dim white lawns and tissues hide
The silver dawn of either side
As mists before a moon may ride;
Let us sing, let us be glad
For lawns and silvers of my lad
All swift, all black his eyes' attack,
The mole upon his cheek is black,*

*But blacker still my tears of lack;
Let us sing, let us be glad
For this thrice darkness of my lad.*

*Young moon and silver rush's limb,
His face and brow are bright and slim,
My body, too, is thin for him;
Let us sing, let us be glad
For the white slightness of my lad.*

*His eyes drank blood and were not red,
The smile upon his lips was bread,
He looked away and I lay dead. . . .
Let us sing, let us be glad
For the turned eye smile of my lad.*

And out of a thousand poets who sang of him,
there was one who made this song:

*By arched bows that guard his eyes,
By their dark sweet treacheries,
By the white sword of his form
And his black hair's scented storm,
By the laughing eyes which keep
Fires to burn the rose of sleep,
By curled scorpions of small hair
With bright stings to stab despair,
By the lily and the vine,
By the honey and the wine,
Beauties of this boy of mine;
By the skin of apricot,
Silver feet which he has got;
By the sun which rises pale,
By the moon, his finger-nail,
By star and spring, for he is both,
I swear that I have loved this oath!*

One day, while this admirable youth was sitting in his father's shop, some boy friends came to talk to him and proposed that he should visit with them a garden which belonged to one of their number. "You shall see for yourself how beautiful it is, O Nur," they said.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-seventy-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"I SHALL BE very glad to come," answered Nur, "but first I must get leave from my father." He went to ask permission, and the merchant not only accorded it but gave his son a purse full of gold that he might not be a charge on his companions.

Nur and the other boys mounted their mules and their donkeys, and came at length to a garden which held all things to sweeten the mouth and delight the eye. They entered by a vaulted gate which might have been the gate of Paradise; for it was made with marble of alternate colour and shaded by climbing vines heavy with clusters of red and black grapes, and white and gold grapes. A poet has said:

*Grapes big with wine, are you more sweet
Black-coated like the crow
Yet twinkling in the sombre vine
As henna-painted fingers shine
When China queens sit all a-row
With folded saffron feet,*

Or pressed to drunken honey in the vats?

As they entered they saw these lines written in fair azure lettering above the gate:

*Would you have gardens, come to me . . .
The breeze, the perfumed vagabond,
False to all else, is true to me
And he shall heal your misery.
The flowers give coloured robes to me
And laugh with all their petalled sleeves,
And they shall heal your misery.
The wet sky gives an alms to me,
Gaudily bending down my trees;
My fruit shall heal your misery.
The Seven Stars drop gifts to me
Of watered gold and cloudy pearl,
And Zephyr fans the gold for me;
My night shall heal your misery.
The loves of dawn are swift with me
To lie upon my eager streams
And kiss the sleeping flowers for me. . .
Shall I not heal your misery?*

They saw the keeper of the garden sitting in the shade beneath a trellis of climbing grapes, and he was as fair as Rizwan who guards the treasures of Paradise. He rose in their honour with cordial greeting and, after helping them to alight, offered himself to be their guide to the beauties of the garden. Following him, they could admire the water courses moving like snakes among the flowers and quitting them only with regret. They could admire the plants heavy with their scents, the trees weary beneath their fruit, the singing birds, the spice shrubs and

the flower thickets of that enchanted place. Above all things and beyond all words, the rare fruit trees rejoiced them. These have been sung by every poet; here are a few out of a thousand of their songs:

POMEGRANATES

*Polished delicacies are we,
Ruby mines in silver earth,
Maidens blood of high degree
Curdled into drops of worth,
Breasts of women when they see
Man is near, and stand them forth*

APPLES

*Musky-sweet apples smile yellow and red,
One cheek for living love, one cheek for dead,
One yellow and dead,
One living and red;
Musky-sweet apples smile yellow and red.*

APRICOTS

*Who doubts you sweet
With savoury almond-stones,
Apricots?
When you were young
You had star-flowers,
Now you are little suns
Ripe in the leaves.*

FIGS

*Figs white, O black, O welcome to my plate,
White girls of Greece, black Ethiopian girls,*

*Though pampered feeders not appreciate,
So sure of my desire, experienced figs. . .*

*Wrinkled and young and knowing on high boughs,
Balanced in every wind and yet rose soft,
More than the blown flower camomile allows
You wear a wavering scent, honey and sun.*

PEARS

*Half acid to a lover's taste,
Flirting hips on a black waist,
Little Ionian,
Little Aleppo,
Little yellow and green girls.*

PEACHES

*We think we fell in a proud virgin's blood,
Therefore we fend our velvet with a mesh
Against the airs;
Eat through our scarlet skin to soft wet flesh
To sweet gold flesh, but guard lest in full flood
You meet the heart of poison unawares.*

ALMONDS

*"As in their sea green shell the pearls,
In triple green we hide, shy girls;
We care to pass the green of youth
In hauberks bitter and uncouth,
Until the waking comes and we
Wanton white hearts from out our tree."*

*Small white ones, many in a hand,
Your green down, as I understand,*

*Is the smooth boyhood of my friend,
And your long halves from end to end
His pretty eyes, O pearls in jade,
Sweet, white, unfaithful, unafraid.*

JUJUBE-PLUMS

*They hang in showers
From ropes of flowers
They're gold bells in a tone,
They make the spice
Of Paradise
And stand beside the throne;
The law was written in their wood
And from the roots of their abode
The four great streams are sown.*

ORANGES

*The breeze on the hill
Laughs with the orange trees,
Smiling in flower-mist.
Oranges,
Women who deck young bodies
With gold robes
For holiday;
Fire-balls holding snow,
Red snow which cannot melt,
May I not think of my dear lad,
His golden granulated moon?*

CITRONS

*Heavy with perfume braziers of green gold
Hung in their leaves,*

*The branches of the citron bend,
Wavering to end
The pain which grieves,
Or eddying to invoke
Joy with their fold and fold
Of spiced green golden smoke.*

LEMONS

*Snow that takes on saffron,
Silver turning gold
Are lemons.
Moons which waver into suns,
Chrysolite bells and manifold
Are lemons, lemons.
Camphor ripening to corn light,
Breasts that else could not be told
Are lemons, lemons, lemons.*

BANANAS

*Heavy bars of gold, or swaying
Or slow ripened in our presses,
Flasks of scent, with widows praying,
Widows dreaming of caresses;
Buttered flesh like paste of cooking,
Yellows of so bold a shape
Old and young cannot help looking,
From your piquant charm escape.*

DATES

*We grow to the sound of the wind
Playing his flutes in our hair,*

*Palm tree daughters,
Brown flesh Bedouin,
Fed with light
By our gold father;*

*We are loved of the free-tented,
The sons of space, the hall-forgetters,
The wide-handed, the bright-sworded
Masters of horses.*

*Who has rested in the shade of our palms
Shall hear us murmur ever above his sleep.*

These are some out of countless poems which have been made about fruits. But it would take more than a lifetime to say all the songs which have been made about the flowers of that garden, the jasmin and the jacinth, the waterlily and the myrtle, the carnation, the narcissus, and every red and white of roses.

Soon the keeper of the garden led the boys along alleys to a pavilion which sat throned among green grass. He invited them to enter for rest and made them sit on brocaded cushions about a basin of water, praying young Nur to take the middle place.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-seventy-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE OFFERED THE BOY a fan of ostrich feathers upon which these lines were painted:

*My white untiring wing
Fans scented air
For a young thing,
To make his sighs
Surmise
Of Paradise,
Before he's there.*

When the lads had taken off their mantles and turbans, they began to chat together and could not keep their eyes off their fair comrade. The keeper of the garden served them himself with a luxurious repast of chicken, goose, quails, pigeons, partridges, stuffed lamb, and baskets of fruit from the branches. As they were washing their hands with a musk soap and drying them on napkins of gold-embroidered silk, the keeper entered with a great handful of roses and said to his guests: "Before you touch the drinks, I wish you to dispose your souls to pleasure with the colour and scent of these flowers. But, dear friends, I will not give you roses save for a song about roses."

The boy who owned the garden took the flowers and, plunging his head among them, breathed there for a long while; then he signed for silence and improvised these lines:

*You hide your crimson blushets in green sleeves,
Balmed hearts of all slight crystal, riders in rose
Who lead the coloured armies of the flowers;*

*Sweeter you open shameless to the breeze
Than kissed wine on child mouths.*

*Your rainbow blood
Riotously compares you with gold dawn,
With cups of purple wine, with garnet fruit*

*On emerald branches, O silver-quivered
Desirous roses; and you chain your loves
With different-tinted coquetry of robes
So that they do not tire. . . .*

When they heard this admirable praise of the rose, the boys could not contain their enthusiasm, but repeated, swaying their heads in chorus: *With different-tinted coquetry of robes*. He who had sung, opened the basket of roses and covered his guests with them; then he filled a great cup with wine and sent it about. At his turn, young Nur felt a certain embarrassment, because he had never drunken wine; his palate was as virgin to fermented drink as was his body to the touch of women. He was still a maiden and his parents had not yet given him a concubine, as is the custom of nobles with public sons, to give them knowledge and experience. His comrades knew of Nur's virginity and had not overlooked it when they arranged the pleasure party.

Seeing that he hesitated before the cup as before a forbidden thing, his friends so laughed that Nur, in pique, raised the vessel to his lips and drained it to the last drop. The other boys gave a cry of triumph and the garden's owner **approached** Nur with another cup, saying: "You are very right not to abstain longer from the precious drops of drunkenness. They are the mothers of virtue, the balms of misery, the sovran cure of body and soul alike. Charming friend, all here are your servants and slaves; therefore I pray you take this cup and drink this wine which is only less exciting than your eyes." Nur could not refuse and emptied the second cup.

Soon the grape ran hot in young Nur's mind and

at once one of his fellows cried to their host: "All this is good, O generous friend, but our joy will not be complete without singing and the sound of women's lips. The poet has said:

*Let the small cup and the deep cup go around;
Old friends, begin!
Take little cups from little hands
Whose camphor-tips are fairy-lands,
But wait, to suck the mighty in,
For the lute's sound."*

The young host answered with a smile and, leaving the hall for a moment, returned leading in by the hand a girl dressed all in blue silk.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-seventy-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SHE WAS A SLIGHT Egyptian admirably waisted, straight as the letter Alif and with Babylonian eyes; her hair was darkness, but her white was the white of silver in the mine or of a peeled almond. She shone so in her sombre robe that you would have taken her for a Summer moon on a Winter night. How then would she not have breasts of white ivory, a harmonious figure, a glory of thighs, and a cushioned bountifulness that was pleasant to the eye? Would she not have about her the scent of rare essences to delight the soul? Surely it was of her the poet sang:

*You are that hand which led the lions in
Made tame by your black bow,
Egyptian girl.*

*Your tented dim silk hair has fallen low
And you are couched therein,
Egyptian girl.*

*Crystal grows grey, and the blue airs begin
To hide their shame in snow,
Egyptian girl;*

*You hide your roses with your hand, but, lo!
We see the hand, we sin,
Egyptian girl.*

Then the young master of the garden said to the girl: "Pleasant queen of stars, we caused you to come into our garden solely to please young Nur, our guest and friend, who honours us with his visit for the first time."

The young Egyptian sat down by Nur's side with a strange glance of the eyes; then she drew a bag of green satin from beneath her veil and took out of it thirty-two little pieces of wood. These she joined together, two and two, as man to woman and as woman to man, until she had formed an Indian lute of exquisite design. She raised her sleeves, uncovering her wrists and arms, pressed the lute like a baby to her breast, and touched it with her fingernails. At this touch the lute shivered and moaned, suddenly remembering its life and destiny: it recalled the earth of its planting, the waters of its refreshment, the places where its stem had silently grown, the birds of its hospitality, the woodcutters, the clever

craftsman, the varnisher, the ship which had carried it, and all the fair hands between which it had passed. These memories made it sing and it seemed to answer thus to the questioning fingers:

*I was a green branch of nightingales,
And, while they taught me music in gold nights,
I dared not stir my leaves.
Now, a fragile lute which grieves
Beneath the touch of tiny nails,
Now, clasped by slim delights
And lying on young breasts,
Remembering my nightingales,
I bring a woodland bliss
To lovers' feasts,
And spill wine's ecstasy where no wine is.*

After this prelude of the lute speaking by itself to the soul, the pretty Egyptian ceased playing for a moment; then, fixing her eyes upon young Nur, she touched the strings again and sang. . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-seventy-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

*The night is witch-blown glass of blue,
Out of a green mystery the nightingale
Invites us;
The breathing of the naked night
Into the silver horn of the moon
Invites us;*

Suspicious age is sleeping;

*Here are myrtles and gold flowers,
The rose's jars are spilled
And wine and stars;*

The cup is full tonight.

Drunken with these lines and wine and love, young Nur threw hot glances on the slave, who answered with a smile. He leaned over her desirously and she brushed lightly against him, kissing him gently between the eyes. Nur crushed his lips to her own and caught her in his arms. This kiss still further intoxicated him and filled him with a poignant longing. The other boys smiled among themselves and signalled the slave who suddenly slipped from Nur's grasp, took up her lute again and sang:

*I, who so often sang of wine and rose,
Suddenly found them when I kissed your mouth,
O light, O fair repose,
O balm, O South!*

When he heard this burning declaration, Nur was lifted up by love and improvised in his turn:

*You walk as proudly as a pirate ship
Walks on the sea, you have a falcon's eyes,
Your hair is a black youth sold with white girls,
Your words are scarlet dyes,
You wear your silver beauty as a belt
Which will not slip
For any speech,
You will not melt
For gold
Or for my soul*

*Or for my sleep
Or for my eyes,
O roses set too high for man to reach.*

The young slave, being an Egyptian, was a complete mistress of the most profound intricacies of pleasure and was by no means loath to instruct the handsome young Nur. As soon as she saw that she was alone with the young man, she rose up and removed her ornaments and her clothes and stood before him garmented only in her jet black hair, saying: "Eye of my soul, a gift is ever proportioned to the generosity of the giver. For your beauty and because you please me, I give you all of myself!" Nur was too befuddled with his unaccustomed wine to reply appropriately but endeavoured to show that he was not unappreciative. The girl found Nur charming and surprising and wondered why his comrades had told her he was inexperienced and virtually a baby. She asked Nur. "But I was," he told her. Then said she: "It is astonishing that you should be so skilful!" and he replied, laughing: "There is fire in the youngest flint."

Thus, among roses and laughter and multiple delights, young Nur learnt love, in the arms of an Egyptian as bright as a bird's eye and whiter than an almond.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-seventy-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SURELY SUCH INITIATION was written in his destiny; for, without it, how could we understand certain more marvellous matters which he was to meet on the road of his happy life?

When their loving was over, Nur perceived that the stars were beginning to shine and that the breath of God was bringing up the evening breeze; therefore he said "By your leave" to the girl, and left her in spite of her supplications. He mounted his mule and returned as quickly as he might to the house where his father and mother were anxiously waiting him.

As soon as he had crossed the threshold his mother ran to take him in her arms, and said: "Why have you been so long away from home, my dear?" Then, as Nur opened his mouth to answer and she smelt the wine upon his breath, she exclaimed: "Unhappy Nur! What have you done? If your father smells this there will be great trouble." Now Nur had held up against his drink while he was in the Egyptian's arms, but the cold night air had unmanned him, so that he staggered from left to right like a drunken man. When his mother saw this, she hastened him to bed and covered him up warmly. Soon the merchant Crown entered the bed-chamber. He was a faithful observer of Allah's law, which forbids fermented drink to His Believers. Seeing his son worn and pale he asked his wife what the matter was; and she replied: "The fresh air gave him a violent headache when he was walking in the

garden with his friends at your suggestion." Annoyed by this reproach and uneasy concerning his son, the merchant leaned over Nur to find out how he did; but, when he smelt the boy's breath, he shook him roughly by the arm, and cried: "You have broken the law of Allah and His Prophet, vile boy! And now you dare to enter your father's house without purifying your mouth!"

As he went on harshly scolding him, young Nur raised his hand, without knowing what he did, and hit his father so violently in the right eye that the old man fell to the ground. The merchant got to his feet and solemnly swore by the third divorce that he would banish his son on the morrow, after having cut off his right hand.

As soon as her husband left the room, Nur's mother tore her garments in despair, for she knew that there was no retreat from such an oath. She stayed all night weeping by the bedside of her drunken son and succeeded, at length, in dissipating the fumes of wine by making him sweat excessively all night. He came to himself with no memory of what had passed; so the poor woman told him of his terrible action and his father's more terrible oath. "Alas, regrets are useless now," she said, "There is only one thing for you to do until the affair has blown over: you must flee from the house before dawn. Take this purse of eleven hundred dinars and depart for the city of Alexandria. When the money is spent, send for more and give me news of yourself." With that she wept again and kissed her son.

At first Nur also wept for shame; then he fastened the purse to his belt, took leave of his mother, and crept unnoticed from the house. He found a boat

which took him down the Nile and landed him safely at Alexandria.

Nur found Alexandria a marvel among cities: a place of sweet climate and delightful inhabitants, with fruit and flower gardens, broad streets and magnificent markets. He took pleasure in wandering through the various quarters of the city and visiting the markets one by one. While he passed among the sellers of flowers and fruit he saw a Persian riding upon a mule, with a girl seated behind who was all fruits and flowers together, and had a waist of five hands' span.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-seventy-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SHE WAS AS white as a nut, as a bleak in the fountain, as a jerboa in the desert. Her face shone like the sun, and her great dark Babylonian eyes looked out from below the guard of stretched bows. The light tissue which covered her hinted at unimagined splendours: at cheeks smoother than satin and planted with roses, at teeth which were ranges of pearl, at straight forth-coming breasts, at thighs like the tail of a fat-tailed Syrian sheep, at untold treasures of loveliness, at a flesh moulded from paste of pearl, crushed rose petals and sweet jasmin. Glory be to Him who made her!

When Nur saw this child, who so surpassed his brown Egyptian garden girl, he followed the fortunate

mule which carried her and walked behind until the rider dismounted in the slave market.

The Persian helped the girl to the ground, and led her by the hand to the public crier, that she might be put up for sale. The crier made way for her through the crowd and set her upon an ivory seat inlaid with gold. Then he let his eye travel over the purchasers, and thus addressed them: "Merchants, buyers, masters of money, citizens and men of the desert, O generous bidders near and far, I pray you open the auction! No blame to the first bidder! Examine and then speak, for Allah alone knows all! Bid, gentlemen, bid, I pray you!"

At this invitation the syndic of all the merchants of that city, an old man against whom none dared bid, walked slowly round the seat and, having minutely examined the slave, exclaimed: "Nine hundred and twenty-five dinars!"

"Nine hundred and twenty-five dinars I am bid!" cried the auctioneer, "This generous gentleman has bid nine hundred and twenty-five dinars for a pearl of price!" Then, as none dared raise the bid, he turned to the girl, saying: "O queen of moons, are you willing to belong to this venerable syndic?" From beneath her veils the girl answered: "Are you mad or has something gone wrong with your tongue that you make me such an offer?" "Why do you say that, O queen of all fair girls?" asked the astonished crier; and the child, showing the little pearls of her mouth in a smile, went on: "Are you not ashamed, before Allah and upon your beard, to sell maidens of my quality to sapless and decrepit old men? I dare swear this dotard's unfortunate wife has used much language in her day about his impo-

tence. Why, it was of this very syndie that the poet wrote:

*Such a man as I have for my own!
He must have been made out of wax,
He answers caresses with sighs and a groan.
Yes, endearment's the way to relax
Such a man,
The best way to make him relax.*

*When there's no one to see or to heed
He ramps and is wanting to fight,
But he falls fast asleep in the moment of need.
Is there nothing on earth to set right
Such a man,
Is there nothing to make him go right?*

*He spends when I'm wanting to keep,
When I'm wanton he closes his hand;
He sleeps when I wake, and he wakes when I sleep
Is there anywhere else in the land
Such a man,
In the length and the breadth of the land?*

When the crowd heard the maiden's disrespectful quotation, they were extremely shocked; and the crier said: "You have blackened my face before these merchants, my mistress! How can you say such things of our syndie, a man most wise and respectable, a sage even?" "If he is a sage, so much the better," she answered, "The lesson may not be lost on him. Anyway, sages with minds only are no use; they ought to run away and hide."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-seventy-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IN ORDER THAT the girl should not say anything more about the old syndic, the crier called out again at the top of his voice: "Gentlemen and generous merchants, the auction is open; I offer this daughter of kings to the highest bidder!" Another merchant, who had not witnessed the syndic's discomfiture, was charmed by the slave's beauty, and cried: "I bid nine hundred and fifty dinars!" But the girl burst out laughing and said to the man, who had come near to examine her: "O sheikh, have you a good strong chopper at home?" "I have, dear mistress," he replied, "but what of it?" Then said she: "Because, before there is anything further between us, you should cut off the greater part of that artichoke which you call a nose. Here is a little poem which you ought to know, as it applies to you especially:

*His nose, a tower of ruddled skin,
Has two great doorways fringed with hair,
By which the race of man might enter in
And all the world be bare."*

When the large-nosed merchant heard this, he was so angry that he gave a terrific sneeze and, seizing the crier by the collar, began to pummel him in the neck, saying: "Vile fellow, have you brought this impudent chit to curse at us and laugh at us?" The crier turned in his grief to the girl, and exclaimed: "As Allah lives, I have never had such a day as this in all the time of my profession! Can you not hold

your tongue and let me earn my money?" Then, to cover the difficulty again, he continued with the auction.

Thus it happened that a third merchant with a very long beard wished to buy the slave; but, when he would have opened his mouth, she broke into a laugh. "O crier, look," she said, "the order of nature is changed in this man; for, although he is a fat-tailed sheep, he carries his tail on the end of his chin! You must not dream of selling me to a man with so long a beard; for intelligence goes in inverse ratio to the length of hair upon the face."

The crier despaired at this and would no longer carry on the sale. He took the girl by the hand and gave her back to the Persian, saying: "She is unsaleable. May Allah open another door of purchase to you." "Allah is the most generous!" said the Persian to the girl, without showing any sign of annoyance, "Come, my child, we will find a suitable purchaser somewhere else." He led her away with one hand and the mule with the other; and, as they went along, the girl shot the black steel-tipped arrows of her eyes among the crowd.

Then for the first time, O marvellous child, you saw young Nur, and felt the teeth of love biting your heart. You stopped suddenly and said to your master: "Sell me to him. He is the one I wish." The Persian turned and saw a youth decked with the beauty of boyhood and elegantly clothed in a plum-coloured mantle. Then he said to the girl: "This young man was among the crowd and he did not bid. How can I offer you to him against his will? Such conduct would lower your price." "I see no difficulty," she answered, "I do not wish to belong to anybody except this youth; no other shall possess me." With that she walked boldly up to Nur and, giving him

a glance charged with temptation, said: "Why did you not bid? Am I not beautiful?" "O queen," Nur replied, "is there beauty like yours in the whole world?" "Why did you not want me, then, when I was put up for sale?" she asked, "I do not think you like me." "Allah bless you, dear mistress!" cried Nur, "If I had been in my own country I would have bought you with all my riches, but here I am a stranger and have nothing save a thousand dinars." "Offer that and you shall never regret it," answered the girl. So Nur undid his belt and weighed over a thousand dinars to the Persian in the presence of the kadi and witnesses. To confirm the act of sale, the girl declared: "I consent to be sold to this delightful youth for a thousand dinars." "As Allah lives, they were made for each other!" cried the crowd; and the Persian said: "May she be a cause of blessing to you, my son! Rejoice together in your youth, for you both deserve this happiness."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-seventy-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

YOUNG NUR WENT to the great khan of the city followed by the girl with swaying hips, and hastened to hire a room. He excused its meanness to the slave, saying: "If I were in Cairo I would lodge you in a worthy palace; but I am a stranger here and have nothing for our needs save the trifle which I

have paid for this room." "Do not be uneasy on that account," she answered with a smile, "Take this ring and sell it in the market. Then buy all that is necessary for a feast, with the best food and drink, with fruits and flowers and perfumes." She handed him a ruby ring of great value and Nur hurried forth, to return in a short time with the necessary provisions. Kiltling his robe, he spread the cloth and carefully prepared the meal. Then he sat down beside the smiling girl, and the two ate and drank without stint. When they were satisfied and the wine had begun its charming business, young Nur, who was a little intimidated by the bright eyes of his slave and wished to find out more about her before giving way to the tumult of his desires, kissed her hand and said: "Sweetheart, will you not tell me your name and the country of your birth?" "I was about to tell you of my own accord, dear Nur," she said; and after a moment's pause continued:

"My name is Miriam and I am the only daughter of a powerful Christian king who reigns in Constantine. When I was little, I received the best possible education from skilful masters. I learnt to ply the needle and the bobbin, to embroider silks, to weave carpets and girdles, to work in gold upon stuffs of silver, and in silver upon stuffs of gold. All that might polish the wit or enhance the beauty of woman I learnt speedily, and grew up in my father's palace hidden from the eyes of men. The women, who looked at me with tender eyes, said that I was the marvel of time. Many kings and princes asked for my hand in marriage; but my father rejected all their suits, as he could not bear to be separated from his only daughter, whom he preferred to his life and to all his sons.

“A time came when I fell ill and vowed that, if I recovered, I would go on pilgrimage to a very holy monastery. I was cured, and, in accordance with my vow, set sail with one of my maids of honour. Hardly had we lost sight of land when our ship was attacked and taken by Mussulman pirates. I was led a slave into Egypt and sold to that Persian merchant whom you saw today. Happily he was impotent. Happily also my master suffered a long and dangerous illness while I was in his house and I nursed him with great care and attention. When he recovered, he wished to repay my kindness and begged me to make some request. I at once asked him to sell me, but only to such purchaser as I should choose myself. The generous Persian promised, and took me to the market, where, eye of my heart, Fate fixed my choice on you.

When she had told him this, the young Christian looked at Nur out of eyes flaming with the gold of temptation, and said: “How could I have belonged to another?” “What is written is written,” replied Nur. With great delicacy the young slave removed her outer garments, dazzling the eyes of her master with the poignancy of her beauty. Nur thanked Allah for the gift which had been made to him; a princess soft and white like lawn, distilling a faint aura of amber, as rose distills rose from its sweet nature; a lustrous, untouched pearl of perfection. He passed his hand over her neck that was as a bar of purest silver and set it to wander through the ways of her hair, while he dropped kisses on her cheek, as many as there are pebbles in the sounding sea. He pressed her in his arms and sweetened his lips with her lips while her eyes sent fire raging through his veins and

made madness dance within his head. Princess Miriam was no ordinary young slave. For she was deeply learned in divers ways and customs. The secrets of Greece, of Egypt, of Araby, of Ethiopia, of India, of the Caucasians, of the Nubians, of Yaman, of China, of Hijaz, of Irak, of Persia were locked within her breast. Now she displayed her profound knowledge to her young master whose beauty had so pierced her heart when her eyes had rested upon him. With a delicacy and an artfulness that seemed more than human, she carried the soul of young Nur to paradisaal heights of ecstasy. No celestial hour could have been more delightful or more versed in the ceremonials of love. Young Nur, dumb with wonderment and joy, could only murmur: "O, my beloved! My beloved!" Youth and love sat enthroned in their hearts and they were not loath to serve these twin kings. Suddenly Miriam stood up and her smile was as the radiance of the sun flashing on ingots of gold.

At this point, Shahrazade fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundredth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE CARAVAN OF DAWN was far upon its way when they awoke next morning. Refreshed from their night's rest they caressed and embraced each other with utmost tenderness. The Christian princess marvelled to see such charm as the Faithful have, and cried aloud: "Indeed, my dear, a religion which inspires its holder to such tenderness as yours, must be the best, the most human and the only true of all religions." She wished to ennoble

herself in Islam at once and therefore asked her lover: "Eye of my heart, what must I do to be ennobled in the Faith? I would become a Mussulman even as you are; for the peace of my soul is not among the Christians, who make a virtue of horrible continence and honour the emasculate priesthood. They are perverts who know not life, and are unhappy because they are never warmed by any sun. My soul would stay here, where it can flower with all its roses and sing with all its birds. Tell me how I can become a Mussulman." Delighted that his great virtue should have converted the princess, Nur answered her: "Dear mistress, our religion is simple and has no exterior complications. Sooner or later all infidels will see the excellence of our belief and flock to us of themselves as from darkness to light, as from the incomprehensible to the easy, as from the impossible to the natural. If you wish to wash away the filth of your Christianity, O princess of benediction, you have but to pronounce these few words: 'There is no God but Allah and Muhamad is the Prophet of Allah!' Even as you make that confession you will become a Believer and a Mussulman." Immediately Princess Miriam, daughter of the Christian king, raised her finger and said in a loud voice: "I pronounce and bear witness that there is no God but Allah and that Muhamad is the Prophet of Allah." Even as she spoke she became ennobled in Islam. Glory be to Him, who, by such simple means, opens the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf, loosens the tongue of the dumb, and lightens the perverted heart! Glory be to the Master of Virtue, the Giver, the sole Good! Amen.

As soon as this important act had been accomplished by the grace of Allah, the two arose from the bed of

their delight and, after going to the privy, made their ablutions and prayed their prayers. Then they ate, drank, and talked pleasantly with each other, so that Nur marvelled more and more at the wisdom and knowledge of the princess.

When the time of prayer came in the afternoon, Nur betook himself to the mosque and Miriam went to walk by Pompey's Pillar. So much for them.

When the Christian king of Constantine learnt that his daughter had been captured by Mussulman pirates, he despaired well-nigh to the grave and sent noble riders in every direction to buy or take her back, by will or force. But all his messengers returned after a certain time and brought him no news. Therefore the king summoned his chief of police, a little old man, blind of the right eye and lame of the left leg. This official was a very devil among spies; he could unravel a spider's web without breaking the threads, steal a sleeper's teeth without waking him, coax the mouthful from a famished Bedouin, and kick a negro three separate times before the man could turn round. The king ordered this invaluable servant to go through every Mussulman country, and not to return without the princess. In case of success, he offered him honours and prerogatives without number, and, in case of unsuccess, the impaling stake. The blind and lame old man set out instantly in disguise; and fruitlessly visited the cities of friend and foe until he came to Alexandria.

On the day of which we tell, he had gone with his slaves for a pleasure party to Pompey's Pillar, and Fate led him to meet Princess Miriam as she was taking the air. He trembled with joy and, kneeling before her, would have kissed her hand; but she,

who had now learnt the decent virtues of Islam, slapped his ugly face, crying: "Evil dog, what are you doing upon faithful ground? Do you think that you have any power over me?"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"I AM NOT to blame in this matter, O princess," answered the man. "I must take you with me to your father, for otherwise the impaling stake awaits me. Your father is dying of despair and your mother never leaves weeping and imagining what may have come to you among these piercers." "I have found the peace of my soul here, and only here," replied the princess, "I will never leave this blessed land; and, if you do not return at once to my father, I myself will have you impaled on Pompey's Pillar."

The lame Christian understood that he would never get the princess to follow him of her own free will, so, with a polite "Excuse me, dear mistress," he signed to his slaves to seize her. The men bound and gagged her in spite of the fierce resistance of her nails, and, under cover of night, carried her on board a ship which was about to set sail for Constantine. So much for the one-eyed wazir and the Princess Miriam.

Young Nur could not understand his slave's delay in returning, so he left the khan and wandered among deserted streets to find her. When he came at last

to the port, certain watermen told him that a ship had just set sail, carrying a girl who answered in every respect to the description which he gave of Miriam.

Nur wept aloud, crying: "Miriam, Miriam, Miriam!" until an old man, touched by his beauty and despair, benevolently asked him the reason of his grief. When Nur had told him his misfortune, the old man said: "Do not abandon hope, my child. The ship which has just left is bound for Constantine and we also are bound for that port tonight, my crew of a hundred Mussulmans and I, their captain. If you sail with me you may recapture the object of your desire." Nur kissed the sailor's hand and followed him on board the ship, which immediately set her sails and made for the open sea.

Allah had written a safe voyage for them and, after fifty-one days, they reached Constantine; but no sooner had they set foot ashore than they were all seized by Christian soldiers and cast into prison by order of the king, who wished to avenge his daughter's abduction on all foreign merchants and sailors.

For you must know that Princess Miriam had been returned to Constantine early on that same morning, that the streets had been decorated in honour of her coming, and that all the people had gone forth to meet her. The king and queen had ridden to the port, followed by all the nobles and dignitaries of the palace; and the queen, after tenderly embracing her daughter, had anxiously asked her, before all else, whether she was still a virgin or whether, to the misfortune and shame of her house, she had lost that seal which there is no replacing. The princess burst out laughing before all that noble company, and cried: "That is a silly question, dear

mother! Do you think that one can remain a virgin among the Mussulmans? Do you not know that the Book of our Faith has set it down that no woman shall grow old a maid in Islam?"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE QUEEN HAD only asked this question publicly in order that the news that her daughter was still a maid might spread quickly and authoritatively among the people; therefore, when she heard Miriam's loud and unexpected answer, she turned bright yellow and fell fainting into the arms of her women, who were all extremely moved by the magnitude of this scandal. Furious at what had happened and raging especially at the freedom with which his daughter had spoken of it, the king felt his gall bladder like to burst in the deeps of his liver, so he hastened the princess to the palace amid general consternation, amid abashed nobles, and amid ancient matrons fuming sourly at the news. He convened a council of state and asked his wazirs and the patriarchs of the church for their advice. These considered together, and then answered: "O king, there is only one way to wash the princess from the stain of Islam; and that is to bathe her in the blood of Mussulmans. You must take a hundred infidels out of the prisons, neither more nor less, and cut off their heads. The blood which flows from their

necks must be collected and the princess must bathe in it, as in a second baptism."

The king ordered the hundred Mussulmans who had been cast into prison to be brought before him; and among their number came young Nur. The captain's head was cut off first, and the heads of his crew followed the same way: each time the blood jetting from their trunks was caught in a large basin. Nur's turn came at last; his eyes were blindfolded, he was placed on the bloody carpet, and the executioner was actually brandishing his sword above the boy's head, when an old woman approached the king, saying: "O king of time, the hundred heads are cut and the basin is full of blood. It were better to spare this young Mussulman and give him to the service of the church." "By Jesus, you are right!" cried the king, "The hundred heads are there and the basin is full. Take this one and use him for the service of the church." The old woman, who was the church's chief guardian, thanked the king; and, while he and his wazirs went to see about the strange baptism of the princess, led young Nur with all speed to the church.

Delighting in the boy's beauty, the old woman made him undress and, giving him a long black robe, a priest's tall bonnet, a large black veil to go over the bonnet, a stole, and a broad belt, dressed him in them herself, so that he might know the proper way to wear them. Then she gave him careful instructions in his duty and, for seven days, supervised and encouraged his toil, while he lamented with all his faithful heart the low necessity of such a service.

On the evening of the seventh day, the old woman said to him: "My son, soon Princess Miriam, who has been purified by a baptism of blood, will come to

church to pass all night in praying God for forgiveness. I tell you this in order that you will be able to do her bidding when I am asleep or call me in case she faints in the excess of her contrition. Do you understand?" And Nur answered, with shining eyes: "I understand."

A short while afterwards, Princess Miriam came to the door of the church, dressed in black from head to feet and having her face covered with a black veil. She bowed low before Nur, thinking him a priest, and then, walking slowly up the aisle, went into a gloomy oratory. Not wishing to disturb the royal devotion, the old woman retired to her bedchamber, leaving Nur to watch the door.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AS SOON AS Nur heard the old woman snoring like an ogress, he slipped into the church and made his way towards the oratory, which was lit by a little lamp burning before the images. (May the fire of hell destroy them!) He went quietly into the oratory and said in a trembling voice: "Miriam, I am Nur." At first the princess thought she was dreaming, but, after a moment's hesitation, threw herself into her lover's arms. They stayed kissing and not speaking for a long while; then they told each other what had happened since they separated, and gave thanks to Allah because they had been reunited.

To celebrate that moment, the princess threw off all the mourning garments which her mother had made her wear in memory of her loss. Nur also cast aside his priestly garment. That place of lost souls became the scene of matters other than those of burial and funeral rites. Kisses, soft words, warm embraces were regnant. The two lovers thought only of each other and the great joy of their reunion. Nur felt his strength come back to him and, in that moment, could have butchered a thousand priests and patriarchs, one after the other. May Allah exterminate the Infidel and give strength to His true Believers.

Towards dawn the bells of the church began to call the wicked to prayer; so Miriam put on her sorry garments again, with many regretful tears, and Nur redressed himself in the robes of impiety. (May Allah, who sees all, excuse that necessary act!) When they had kissed a last time, the princess said: "I suppose, dear Nur, that you have learnt the places and surroundings of this church during the last seven days?" "I have, dear mistress," answered Nur; and she continued: "Listen carefully, for I have made a plan which will enable us to flee for ever from this land. Tomorrow, at the setting in of night, open that door of the church which overlooks the sea, and make your way down to the shore. There you will find a little ship with a crew of ten, and a captain who will take your hand as soon as he sees you. Be very careful to wait until he names your name; above all, do nothing precipitate. Have no fear for me, for I shall find a way to join you, and Allah will deliver us both out of this cruel people's hands. One other thing, dear Nur: you can play an excellent trick on the patriarchs by stealing all

which is of great account and little weight in the church's treasure, and emptying the chest where they keep the gold which rewards their imposture." Having repeated her instructions word for word Miriam left the church and, with downcast eyes, re-entered the palace, where her mother was waiting to preach to her concerning repentance and chastity. May the Faithful be for ever preserved from chastity, that impure thing; may they never have to repent for ought save harm to a fellow creature! *Amen*.

When night began to fall and the old woman to snore, Nur laid hands on all the precious treasures of that church and stored in his priest's belt all the gold and silver which he found in the patriarchs' coffer. Laden with these righteous spoils, he hastened to the little harbour by the sea, where he found a small vessel whose captain took his hand and spoke to him by name. The man gladly helped him on board with his precious burden, and then gave the signal for departure.

But instead of obeying their captain's order to cast off the ropes from the stakes on shore, the sailors began to murmur. One of them lifted his voice, and said: "O captain, you know very well that we have received quite different orders from the king. He intends to send his wazir aboard tomorrow to go on a scouting cruise after certain Mussulman pirates, who are said to have threatened to capture the Princess Miriam." Furious at this resistance, the captain cried: "Do you dare to disobey me?" and with one blow of his sword cut off the speaker's head. The blood-red sabre shone in the night like a torch; but this prompt action did not cow the rest of the men, who continued to murmur. Then, in a flash, they met the same fate as their comrade, dropping their

heads one after another upon the deck. The captain pushed their bodies overboard with his foot.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE CAPTAIN TURNED to Nur, and cried in a voice which brooked no gainsaying: "Let us be off! Cast off the ropes and set the sails, while I mind the tiller." As Nur had no arms with which to defend himself or cut his way to shore, he obeyed as well as his lack of experience permitted; soon the little ship, guided by the captain's firm hand upon the bar, made for the open sea with all sails set and ran before a favourable wind for Alexandria.

As they went, poor Nur lamented secretly, not daring to complain openly before the sparkling eyes and enormous beard of the captain. "Alas, alas, that this should have fallen upon my head when I thought that I had finished with my troubles! Each thing is worse than that which went before," he said to himself, "If only I understood all this! What will come to me with this bloodthirsty man? Surely I shall not escape alive!" All through the night, as he looked after the sails and tackle, he gave himself up to these desolating thoughts; but at morning, when they were in sight of a town where they might take on new hands, the captain rose of a sudden, as if in great agitation, and cast his turban at his feet. Then, before Nur's incredulous eyes, he burst out

laughing and snatched away his beard and moustaches. In his place on deck there stood a girl as fair as the moon rising over the sea.

Nur recognised Princess Miriam and cast himself at her feet in admiration and great joy; he confessed how terribly he had feared the captain for his beheading capacity, and Miriam laughed consumedly at his terror. When they had kissed, they returned to their duty of working the ship into harbour. They engaged a sufficiency of sailors and put out to sea again, but the princess, owing to her marvellous knowledge of navigation and ocean ways, continued to give orders during every day. She lay with her beloved each night beneath the naked sky and tasted all delights of him in the sea-fresh air. May Allah guard them and increase His favour towards them!

Their voyage was favourable and they sighted Pompey's Pillar without mishap. When the ship had come into port and the crew had disembarked, Nur said to Miriam: "Now we have come to safety, to a Mussulman land. Wait here for me a moment while I buy you those things necessary for a decent entry into the city. You have no robe or veil or slippers." "Do not be long," cried Miriam as Nur disembarked. So much for them.

On the morning after their departure, the Christian king was informed that Miriam had disappeared after her midnight vigil in the church of the patriarchs, that the new worker at the church was also not to be found, that a little ship had put off from the shore, and that the headless bodies of ten sailors had been found on the sand. The king reflected for an hour, with a boiling rage in his belly, and then said: "If my ship has gone and my daughter has gone, doubtless they have gone together." He called to him the cap-

tain of the port and the one-eyed chief of police. "You have heard the news," said he, "My daughter has returned to the land of the Mussulmans to find her piercers. If you do not bring her back alive or dead, nothing will save you from the impaling stake. Get you gone!"

The lame old one-eyed wazir and the captain of the port armed a vessel in all haste and set immediate sail for Alexandria, where they arrived at the same moment as the fugitives. They recognised the little ship lying at anchor and Princess Miriam seated on a pile of cordage upon the bridge. At once they sent a boatload of armed men over the side, who took possession of the princess's boat and, after setting fire to it, gagged the girl and carried her back to their own vessel. Without a moment's delay, they put out again to open sea and, arriving at Constantine, handed the princess back to the king her father.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN THE KING met his daughter's eyes, he leaned furiously forward on his throne, shaking his fist at her and crying: "Woe, woe upon you, you wanton harlot! Surely you have abjured the faith of your fathers and set your heart upon those who took away your seal! Hardly will your death wash out this taint upon our faith and on our name! Make ready to be hanged at the church door." "You know my frank-

ness, father," answered the princess calmly, "Tell me, then, what crime I have committed in returning to a land where the sun heats all things with his rays and the men are solid men and virtuous? Would it not rather have been a crime if I had stayed here among the priests and eunuchs?" The king answered her not at all, but cried to the executioners: "Take this vile daughter from before my face and see that she is very long in dying."

As the executioners were laying hold on the girl, the one-eyed wazir limped up to the throne and, after kissing the earth between the king's hands, said to him: "O king of time, allow your slave to make one prayer to you before the princess dies." "Speak, faithful old wazir; speak, old prop of Christ!" answered the king, and the wazir continued: "For a long time your most unworthy slave has felt himself moved towards the charms of our princess. Therefore he begs you not to put her to death but to reward him with her hand in marriage for all his accumulated proofs of devotion to the throne and to the Cross. He is so ugly that the marriage will be sufficient punishment for any faults which the princess has committed. Also, he takes it upon himself to keep her closely guarded in his palace, safe from all possibility of flight."

"I see no objection," said the king, "but, poor old friend, what will you do with this hell-brand? Are you not afraid of horny consequences? By Christ, I would put my finger in my mouth and reflect a long time before doing anything so rash." "I have no illusions sire," replied the wazir, "I know the difficulty of the situation, but I also know very well how to keep my wife away from her excesses." The king laughed so heartily at this that he shook the throne.

"O halting father," he cried, "I can only say that I hope you will soon have two great elephant tusks upon your brow. . . . But remember this: if you allow my daughter to escape and add but one more to her heinous catalogue of offences, your head shall answer for it. Only on that condition do I give my consent." But the old wazir accepted the conditions and kissed the king's feet.

Then the priests, the monks, and the patriarchs, with all the dignitaries of Christendom, were informed of the marriage; and great feasts were given in the palace. When the ceremonies were over, the disgusting old man made his way into the princess's bed-chamber. Surely Allah will not allow ugliness to touch such splendour! May that stinking pig breathe out his soul before he soils such purity! We will find these two again.

When Nur returned with a veil, a robe, and a pair of citron-yellow leather slippers, he saw a great crowd coming and going about the harbour; and, learning from them that a Christian ship had carried off a girl and set fire to a little vessel lying by the quay, changed colour and fell into a swoon. When he came to himself, he told his sad adventure to the bystanders, who all reproached his conduct bitterly, saying: "You have got what you deserved! Why did you leave her alone? What need was there to buy a veil or new citron-yellow leather slippers? Could she not have come ashore as she was? Could she not have covered her face with a bit of sailcloth? As Allah lives you have got what you deserved!" While they were thus speaking, the old man who owned the khan where Nur and the princess had lodged, came up to the group and recognised his young friend. When he had asked and been told the cause of Nur's grief, he said: "The

veil was superfluous, the new robe was superfluous, and the yellow slippers were superfluous; but to talk about them now smacks infinitely more of superfluity. Come with me, my son. You are young and should be enjoying yourself instead of weeping and despairing for a woman. The race of pretty girls has not yet quite died out in our country; we will be able to find you some expert and desirable Egyptian who will make you forget all about your Christian princess."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"NOTHING WILL MAKE me forget my loss, good uncle," answered Nur sadly, "Nothing will console my grief." "Then what will you do?" asked the sheikh, "The ship has gone and your tears avail you nothing." "I will return to the city of the Christian king and bear away my mistress by force," replied the youth. Then said the old man: "My child, do not listen to these rash suggestions of your soul. Though you succeeded in bringing her away once, avoid a second attempt, and do not forget the proverb: *Not every time you drop a cup will it be worth the taking up.*" "I thank you for your prudent counsels, my uncle," answered Nur, "but nothing can frighten me; I will get back my love even at the price of dear life itself." Then, as Fate provided him with a ship ready to set sail for Christian lands, young Nur embarked in haste.

The old owner of the khan had good reason for his warnings, because the Christian king had sworn, by Jesus and the impious books, to exterminate the race of Mussulmans on land and sea and, for that purpose, had armed a hundred warships to scour the waters, ravage the coasts, and carry ruin, bloodshed, and death into all parts. As soon, therefore, as Nur's ship came into the sea of the isles, it was taken by one of these warships and towed into Constantine harbour. This happened on the first day of the feast given for the marriage of the one-eyed wazir with the Princess Miriam. The better to celebrate the wedding and to glut his vengeance, the king ordered all the Mussulman prisoners to be impaled immediately.

This cruel order was carried out; and, one by one, the Believers were impaled in front of the palace where the marriage was in progress. When none remained to suffer save Nur, the king looked at him carefully, and said: "I do not know how it is, but, by Christ, I think this is the same young man whom I spared before to work in the church! He escaped once; how, then, has he returned? . . . Ho, ho! Let him be impaled twice!" At that moment the lame wazir prostrated himself before the king, saying: "Sovereign of time, I have sworn an oath to immolate three young Mussulmans before the door of my house to bring good fortune to my marriage. I pray you let me choose three out of the last shipload." "I did not know that you had sworn that oath," answered the king, "you might have had thirty instead of three. But now only this one remains; take him in the meanwhile." The wazir led Nur away, meaning to water the threshold of his palace with his blood, but, when he came to reflect that his vow would not be accomplished unless he immolated three youths together, he

had him thrown, fasting and in chains, into the stable of his palace until such time as he should procure two more victims.

Now there were, in the wazir's stable, twin horses of surpassing beauty and noblest Arab breed, whose pedigrees were fastened in little bags round their necks by chains of turquoise and gold. One, called Sabik, was white as a dove; the other, known as Lahik, was blacker than a crow. These two horses were famous in Christian and Mussulman lands; they were the envy of kings; but one of them had a white blemish on his eye, which the wisest veterinaries had not been able to cure. The wazir himself, who was deeply learned in medicine, had tried to remove the mark, but had only succeeded in increasing its density.

When Nur was thrown into the stable, he saw the blemish on the horse's eye and began to smile. The wazir noticed this smile and asked the reason of it. "I smiled at that blemish," answered Nur. So the wazir said: "I have heard that the men of your race know more about horses and their cure than we. Was it that knowledge which made you smile?" Nur was extremely skilful in the veterinary art, therefore he replied: "You are right; there is no one in Christendom who could cure that horse; but I could easily do so. What will you give me tomorrow if the animal is then as bright-eyed as a gazelle?" "I will give you life and liberty," answered the wazir, "I will name you chief of my stables and horse-doctor to the palace." "Undo my bonds, then," said Nur. The wazir undid the bonds, and at once the young man called for suet, wax, lime, and garlic; with these he mixed concentrated juice of onions and made a plaster which he applied to the ailing eye. Then he lay

down upon a pallet in the stable and left the cure to Allah.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

NEXT MORNING THE wazir limped into the stable and lifted the plaster. His joy and astonishment knew no bounds when he saw his horse's eye made bright again like the light of morning. He put his own mantle upon Nur and appointed him chief of his stable and first horse-doctor of the palace, assigning him a room above the stalls, separated from his own apartment by a courtyard only. Then he returned to the feasting, without a thought that no man escapes his destiny or that there are blows in the sleeve of Fate which shall sound down the ages.

That was the seventh day of the festivities; upon that night the hideous old man was due to take possession of his bride. (Cursed be the Far One!) The princess knelt at her window, hearing the last tumult of cries sent up in her honour and sadly dreaming of her beloved, the strong and handsome Egyptian lad who had plucked her flower. Memory brought a great wave of sadness to bathe her soul. "That foul old man shall never touch me!" she said, "I will kill myself! I will throw myself into the sea!" As she spoke thus bitterly, she heard a boy's voice below her window, singing Arab songs of separation. It was Nur: having finished his work upon the two horses, he had

mounted to his chamber and now leaned from his window dreaming of his mistress. This was the song he sang:

*In every cruel region
I have sought dead felicity,
A ghost has led me on;
Alas, alas for me!*

*Crazed by my imagining
I think I see
You in each pretty thing;
Alas, alas for me!*

*Now I think that I hear lutes
Distantly, plaintively
Answer the sighs of lutes;
Alas for you and me!*

When Princess Miriam heard the faithful heart of her lover singing, she was moved almost outside herself with joy; but, being wise and self-controlled, she dismissed her servants without letting them see anything of her trouble. Then she took paper and pen, and wrote:

“In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate! And after! The peace and blessing of Allah be upon you, O Nur!

“Your slave Miriam salutes you; your slave Miriam burns for you! Read and carry out what I shall write.

“Nightfall is the time of lovers; therefore at nightfall take the two horses, Sabik and Lahik, and lead them outside the city by the Sultan’s Gate. I will find

means to join you there. If any ask what you are doing, say that you exercise the horses."

She fastened this letter inside a silk handkerchief and waved it out of the window until she saw Nur come near. Then she let the handkerchief fall; Nur picked it up and opened it. He carried the paper to his lips and forehead, after he had read it, to show that he had understood. When night, eagerly expected, had fallen at last, he saddled the two noble horses and, passing from the city without remark, held them outside the Sultan's Gate and waited for the bride.

When Princess Miriam saw her disgusting and one-eyed husband enter her room, she shivered with repulsion; but, as she had a plan to carry through, she controlled herself and, rising in his honour, begged him to be seated by her side. "You are the pearl of the East and West, my queen," said the lame old man, "It is at your feet that I should be." "A truce to compliments," answered the princess, "Where is the supper? I am hungry and we should eat before all things."

The old man called his slaves, who instantly set before them great dishes, covered with every delicacy which in the air may be, or swim in sea, or walk the earth in its degree, or grow on any tree. They ate together, and the princess constrained herself to hand her husband morsels, so that he was ravished by her attention, and flattered himself on the unhopèd success of his marriage. Suddenly he fell head over heels, unconscious; for Miriam had privily thrown into his cup a pinch of Moroccan banj, capable of stretching an elephant full length. Allah does not allow ugliness to soil His beauty.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AS SOON AS Princess Miriam saw the wazir rolling at her feet like a swollen pig, she filled two bags with his gems and gold, girt on a sword which had been tempered in the blood of lions, and, covering her face with a great veil, slipped down from the window by means of a cord and arrived in the courtyard unperceived. She hurried out of the city, without being questioned, and, when she saw Nur holding the horses, ran towards him. She leapt on Lahik's back, crying: "Mount Sabik and follow me!" Nur jumped on the back of the second horse and set off at full gallop after the retreating princess. They rode like that all night until the dawn.

Not until she judged that there was sufficient distance between them and possible pursuit, did Miriam allow the horses to draw breath. They had come to a place refreshed by green meadows, by fruit trees, wild flowers and silver water; as the dawn breeze wooed them to quiet pleasure, the two sat down peacefully side by side and told each other of the separation. When they had drunk of the stream and eaten fruit, they washed and lay down in each other's arms, refreshed, ready, and loving. In those moments of entire possession they made up for all abstinence and then went to sleep in the silent air of morning.

At noon they were wakened by the shaking of the earth under ten thousand hoofs. They opened their eyes and saw a whirlwind of dust hurrying towards

them, from which came flashes as of cloudy lightning. Soon they heard the jingling of swords; for a whole army had come in search of them.

That morning the Christian king had risen early to have news of his daughter, for he had misgivings concerning her marriage with one whose marrow had so long since been melted. When he found her husband unconscious on the floor and no sign of the princess, he dropped vinegar into the old man's nose and then cried out on him in a terrible voice: "O wretch, where is your wife?" "O king, I do not know," answered the poor wazir, as he came to himself; so the king split the one-eyed head with a single blow of his sword, and the blade came out shining through the jawbone. May Allah keep that old man's unbelieving soul for ever on the lowest beach of hell!

Even as the wazir fell dead, trembling grooms came to inform the king of the disappearance of Sabik and Lahik with their new guardian. The king at once understood that his daughter had fled with the horses, and ordered his three chief nobles to set themselves each at the head of a band of three thousand men, and take up the pursuit. He himself collected a troop of patriarchs and put himself at the head of the combined army.

Seeing this great host approach, Miriam leapt into the saddle and cried to Nur: "Stay behind, I beg you, for I wish to fight with them alone, though they are as numerous as sand upon the seashore." Whirling her sword aloft, she improvised these lines:

*The day of my strength, of my riding
Alone;
Blue single steel, flashing, dividing
Alone!*

*My hour of breaking terrible towers
Alone;
My hour of black wild riding hours
Alone! See me alone!*

So singing, she rode out in the face of her father's army.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE KING ROLLED his eyes, as if they had been quicksilver, when he saw her coming. "By the faith of Christ," he cried, "she is mad! She is going to attack us!" He halted his troops and went forward alone to meet her, calling: "O perverse daughter, do you dare come up against me and all the army of Christendom? Did you renounce all shame when you renounced your God? If you do not sue for my mercy you are most certain of death." "What is past cannot be called back," answered Miriam, "that is a mystery of Islam. I believe that there is One God, even Allah, and that Muhamad is the Prophet of Allah! Though I drink a bitter cup, I will never leave my Egyptian lover!" She made her horse caracole in front of the Christian arms, and sang this song, while she slashed the air with her sparkling sword:

*I call sweet pasture for my blade
Because he never bade retreat*

*Retreat, retreat, retreat;
Ride if you dare!*

*I call your heads to the red sand,
Your hearts to vultures and to crows,
To crows, to crows, to crows;
Ride if you dare!*

*I call my sword a cup-bearer
Because he pours a cheer of myrrh,
Of myrrh, of myrrh, of myrrh;
Ride if you dare!*

*I call for my grief's bitter bath,
My feet tread out a path of blood
Like myrrh! The crows retreat;
Ride if you dare!*

Thus she sang, and then flattered her horse with her hand, whispering in his ear: "This is your day of race, your day of nobility, O Lahik!" The son of the sand heard and shivered; he threw himself forward like the North wind, jetting fire from him nostrils. With a terrible roar, Princess Miriam charged the left wing of the Christians, and, even as her horse went by, mowed off the heads of nineteen riders with her sword. Then she galloped back to the middle of the line, and defied the Christians with loud cries.

Seeing the havoc which she had made, the king called the first of his noble troop leaders, a mighty warrior as quick as fire, whose name was Barbout. He was the chief prop of that throne and the first noble of them all, because of his strength and bravery; the essence of his being was knighthood. He advanced towards the king upon a fine powerful horse of famous

race; he was armoured in a coat of gold mail as close knit as the wings of a locust. He carried a sharp destroying sword, a lance like a ship's mast, which could have overcome a mountain in one shock, four keen javelins, and a terrible mace quilled with spikes of steel. Thus weaponed and coated he had the appearance of a tower.

"You see the carnage wrought by this unnatural girl, O Barbout?" said the king, "It is for you to conquer and bring her to me, living or dead." He had his knight blessed by patriarchs, covered in motley clothes and lifting crosses above their heads. They read the Gospel over him and called down the blessing of their idols upon him. But we invoke the strength and majesty of Allah!

When he had kissed the standard of the Cross, Barbout spurred into the plain, blaring like an elephant and horribly cursing our Faith. May he be damned eternally! On her side, the princess roared like a lioness fighting for her cubs and bore down, bellowing, upon her foe. The two shocked together, mountains moving, furiously head to head and yelling like devils. Anon they separated and fainted; then they came together again in a storm of blows, given and guarded marvellously. Often they were hidden by the dust of their riding; the heat of their approaches was so great that the stones beneath them flamed like coals. This first engagement continued for an hour with equal skill and courage on both sides.

But a time came when Barbout, who was the first to lose his breath, wished to make an end; therefore he transferred his mace to his left hand and, with his right, hurled one of his javelins at the princess. He growled like thunder as he let it speed. The bright swift flight of that javelin blinded the eyes of men;

but the princess turned it aside with the flat of her sword, so that it hissed harmlessly into the sand far off where they fought.

"Kill, kill!" cried Barbout, as he hurled his second javelin; but the princess turned that aside also, and the third and the fourth. Mad with humiliation, the Christian knight took his mace back into his right hand and, with a roar like twenty lions, hurled it mightily at his foe. The enormous mass boomed heavily through the air and would have most assuredly broken Miriam to pieces, had she not caught it as it flew, and held it. Glory be to Allah who made such a girl! She brandished the mace in her turn, so that the eyes of all the army were dazzled by her strength, and then galloped upon Barbout, snarling as a she-wolf snarls, her breath hissing like horned vipers. "A lesson in the use of the mace!" she cried.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-tenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN BARBOUT SAW her bearing down upon him, earth and sky slipped away from before his eyes, together with all the courage of his heart; so he turned his horse and fled, keeping his shield behind him as a protection. But the heroic princess followed hard and, whirling the mace about her head, threw it with all her might. It crashed upon his shield, heavier than bolt from arbalist, and, breaking out four of the

knight's ribs, pitched him from the saddle. He rolled in blood upon the dust, tearing at the desert with his nails; but his death was painless, for Azrail came to him in that last hour and bore his soul away to compt before Him from whom no secrets are hid.

Princess Miriam galloped towards the dead man and, leaning low from her horse's back, picked up the fallen enormous lance, and wheeled again. When she had retreated a few paces, she thrust the mighty weapon deep into the earth and, checking Lahik in face of her father's army, leaned her back against the spear-shaft; then she stayed immobile with lifted head. She was made one body with the horse and with the lance, unbreakable as a mountain, immovable as Fate.

When the Christian king saw Barbout's end, he beat his face for grief and then called upon Bartus, the leader of his second troop, an intrepid fighter at hand to hand. "O Bartus," he said, "go forth and avenge your brother in arms!" So Bartus bowed before him, and galloped his horse against the princess.

She did not move; her horse stood steady as a bridge. She met the scorpion sting of the knight's lance as he rode her down; and the warriors craned forward to see the terrible marvels of that fight. Shrouded in dust, the foes laid on stupendous blows which groaned in the air before they fell; they raged together in a mist of terrifying taunts. "By Christ, there is need of all my strength!" panted Bartus; and, brandishing a murderous pike, hurled it at Miriam, crying: "That, that!"

He did not know that Miriam was the incomparable heroine of East and West, the warrior girl of land and sand, the valley and mountain soldier of all time.

She saw the movement and interpreted it; even as

the pike brushed her breast, she seized its staff and cast it back; it passed through her foe's belly and shattered the column of his spine. He fell as a tower falls, and the jangle of his arms sounded all across the plain. His soul hurried to meet the soul of his comrade among the anger of a Mighty Judge.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-eleventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

PRINCESS MIRIAM MADE Lahik prance about the opposing army, as she cried: "Where are the slaves? Where are the knights? Where are the heroes? Where is my one-eyed husband? Are you all frightened of a woman, O Christians?"

In mortification and despair the king called his third troop leader, an illustrious avoider of women called Fasyan the Farter. "O Fasyan, most womanless man," he said, "it is for you to go up against this wanton and avenge the deaths of your companions." Fasyan bowed low in assent, and then galloped out towards the girl, trailing behind him such a thunder of prodigious farts that the sails of a ship might have been filled by them and the hair of little children turned to white.

Miriam came to meet him on Lahik, swifter than driving hail; the two crashed together, warring hills, and the knight aimed a terrible blow at the princess. She avoided it with ease and broke the lance of her foe in two; then, as Fasyan was carried past, she lunged backwards with the heel of her lance and broke his im-

pious backbone. With a shrill cry she wheeled her horse upon the dying man and, through his open mouth, pegged his head mightily to the earth with her lance.

Seeing their three champions thus slaughtered one after another, the Christian hosts stood in dumb surprise, until they felt the breeze of panic pass above their heads, with a doubt of the humanity of such a girl. Then they turned tail and, giving their chargers to the wind, sought safety in flight. Miriam devoured the distance behind them, cutting off groups or straggling knights, flailing with her sword, filling a thousand cups with death, casting a thousand swimmers into the sea of Destiny. Her heart rejoiced, so that it seemed bigger than the world; some she killed and some she wounded and all she strewed wide upon the earth. The Christian king fled in the middle of his warriors, surrounded by frightened priests and patriarchs, lifting his arms on high: so you may see a shepherd driven in the middle of his flock before a storm. Nor did the princess cease her following and slaughter until the sun veiled his face with a pale mantle.

Then, and then only, Miriam checked her victorious course and returned to her beloved. Nur had been disquieted for her. He took her in his arms that night and made her forget the fatigues and dangers by which she had saved them, in a sweet succession of caresses. Next morning they discussed in what city it would be most pleasant for them to live and, having decided on Damascus, set out for that delightful city. So much for them.

The Christian king returned to his palace in Constantine with his nose hanging to the ground and the sack of his stomach turned about for the death of Barbout, Bartus, and Fasyan; he called a council of state

and described the shame which had been brought upon him. "She is the child of a thousand filthy horns," he said, "I do not know where she has gone, but we may be sure that it is to some Mussulman land, for she says that the men of those places are vigorous and untiring. The harlot is a brand straight from Hell; she does not find Christians sufficiently valiant for her desire. O Patriarchs, I ask your advice in this distressing matter." The patriarchs, monks, and nobles reflected for an hour, and then answered: "O king of time, after all that has happened it only remains for you to send a letter and gifts to the khalifat Haroun Al-Rachid, who is master of those lands which will receive the fugitive. You must write in your own hand, with every kind of promise and oath of friendship, to persuade him to arrest the lovers and send them back, under escort, to our city. That will not bind us to anything with that chief of Unbelievers; for, when the prisoners are returned to us, we can massacre their escort and forget our promises. It is our custom to forget our promises when they have been made to Unbelievers, to Muhamadans." Thus spake the patriarchs and counsellors of Christendom: may they be damned in this life and the next, for their little faith and monstrous crimes.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-twelfth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE SOUL OF the king of Constantine was as base as any of the souls which counselled him; therefore

he did not hesitate to put this treacheous plan into execution. He did not know that perfidy turns sooner or later back to the perfidious, and that the eye of Allah watches over the Faithful, to guard them from their stinking foes.

He took a reed and paper, and wrote a letter in Greek characters to Haroun Al-Rachid, in which, after repeated phrases of admiration and friendship, he said:

“O powerful emir of the Mussulmans, our brothers, I have an unnatural daughter, called Miriam, who has been seduced by a young Egyptian of Cairo and borne away from me and taken into the lands which you most gloriously rule. O powerful emir of the Mussulmans, our brothers, I beg you to make inquisition until they are found and then to send them back to me under sure escort.

“In return, I will load that escort with honours and do all that I can to be agreeable to you. Among other things, I promise, as a fruit of my gratitude, to have a mosque built in my capital by any architects whom you shall care to choose. I will send you unimaginable riches, such as the memory of man cannot parallel: girls like houris, beardless boys like moons, treasures that the fires of time shall never touch, pearls, coloured jewels, horses, mares and foals, camels with their young, and an array of mules loaded with the fairest products of our clime. Also, if that be not enough, I will draw close the confines of my kingdom to make your frontiers greater. I seal these promises with my seal; I, Cæsar, king of those who bow before the Cross.”

When he had sealed this letter, the king gave it to the new wazir by whom he had replaced his old one-eyed servitor, and said to him: “If you obtain

audience of this Haroun fellow, address him thus: 'O very powerful khalifat, I come to claim our princess; she is the object of my mission. If you hearken favourably to our request, you can count upon my master to send you gifts of great price.''' To make his messenger still more zealous, he promised, in case of success, to load him with prerogatives and give him the princess for his wife. Then he dismissed him with a final recommendation to place the letter in the khalifat's own hands.

After a long journey, the ambassador arrived in Baghdad, where he rested for three days. Then, having enquired his way to the palace, he solicited an audience and was led into the diwan. There he threw himself before the khalifat and kissed the earth three times between his hands, before giving the letter to him. Haroun Al-Rachid unsealed the letter and, after reading it, showed himself favourable to the request which it contained, though he knew that it proceeded from a king who knew not Allah. He wrote commands to the governors of all his provinces, insisting that the two fugitives should be found and sent at once to his court, and promising the direst punishments in cases of disobedience. Messengers, on horseback and on racing dromedaries, carried these orders to the walis of each province; and, in the meanwhile, the khalifat entertained the Christian ambassador and his suite within the palace.

When the princess had routed the army of her father with her single sword and had pastured the vultures with the three knights who had dared to come against her, she set out with Nur for Syria and came without accident to the gates of Damascus. Since, however, they had journeyed by short stages, stopping at each fair place to give themselves up to love,

they arrived at Damascus some days after the khali-fat's riders had brought the order for their arrest to that city. Being quite ignorant of what awaited them, they fearlessly gave their names to the police spies and were immediately arrested by the wali's guards. These guards made them turn their horses' heads, before they had set foot in the city, and galloped them, by ten days of forced marches, across the desert to Baghdad. When they arrived, worn by fatigue, they were led between soldiers into the diwan.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-thirteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AS SOON AS they knew themselves in the august presence of the khalifat, they prostrated themselves before him and kissed the earth. The chamberlain on duty cried: "O Commander of the Faithful, these are Princess Miriam, daughter of the Christian king, and Nur, her ravisher, son of the merchant Crown of Cairo. They were both arrested at the gate of Damascus by the wali of that city." The khalifat looked at Miriam and was delighted by her. "Are you Miriam, daughter of the Christian king?" he asked; and she replied: "I am Princess Miriam, slave to one man only, to the Prince of Believers, the Protector of the Faith, the descendant of the Lord of Messengers." Pleased with this reply, the khalifat turned to Nur and was charmed by him also. "Are you young Nur,

son of the merchant Crown of Cairo?" he asked; and the youth answered: "I am Nur, slave to the Commander of the Faithful, the prop of empire, the warrior of the Faith." Then said the khalifat: "How did you dare to ravish this Christian princess, in defiance of the law?" So Nur asked leave to speak, and told the khalifat the whole of his adventure in its smallest details. But nothing would be gained by repeating it in this place.

Then Al-Rachid turned to Princess Miriam, saying: "Your father has sent this ambassador with a letter of his own writing in which he assures me of his gratitude and of his intention to build a mosque in Constantine, if I send you back to his dominion. What have you to say?" Miriam threw back her head and answered in a voice both proud and sweet: "O Commander of the Faithful, you are Allah's representative on earth; you are the stay of the law of the Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!). I am now a Mussulman, believing in the unity of Allah; I make my profession in your presence and say: There is no God but Allah and Muhamad is the Prophet of Allah. How then, O Prince of Believers, can you send me back to those infidels, who set up equals to Allah, who believe in the divinity of Jesus the son of man, who adore idols, and revere the Cross? They even render superstitious worship to many who have died and passed into the burning anger of our God. If you were to give me up to these Christians I would accuse you in the Day of Judgment, before Allah and before his Prophet, your cousin (upon whom be prayer and peace!). For in that day the grandeurs of this world shall be as nothing."

The khalifat exulted in his soul when he heard Miriam's profession, and answered with tears in his

eyes: "My daughter, I pray that Allah will never put it in my heart to deliver a Mussulman who believes in Him into the hands of infidels! May he guard you and spread His blessing and mercy about you, and increase the conviction of your faith within you! For your bravery you may ask me what you will. I swear to refuse you nothing, even to the half of my kingdom. Refresh your eyes, O Miriam, lift up your heart and banish every care. . . . Would it please you to be married to this young man, son of our servant Crown, the Cairene merchant?" "Why would it not please me, O Prince of Believers?" answered Miriam, "Has he not bought me? Has he not plucked that within me which there was to pluck? Has he not risked his life again and again for my sake? Has he not given peace to my soul by his revelation of the Faith?"

At once the khalifat summoned the kadi and witnesses, and had a contract of marriage drawn up for the two lovers. Then he called the Christian ambassador to him, saying: "You have seen with your eyes and heard with your ears that I cannot agree to the request of your master. The Princess Miriam is a Mussulman and belongs to us. I will not commit an action for which I could not account to Allah and his Prophet on the Last Day. It is written in the Book of Allah: 'Power shall never be given to the Infidel over the Believer.' Return to your master and tell him what you have seen and heard."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-fourteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN THE AMBASSADOR realised that the khalifat would not give up the Christian king's daughter, he dared, through spite and pride, to lose his temper. "By Christ," he cried, "were she twenty times a Mussulman, she must go back to her father. If not, he will lay waste your kingdom and cover your land, from the Euphrates to Yaman, with ravaging troops."

"How?" cried the khalifat, "Does this Christian dog dare to threaten us? Let his head be cut off and set up at the entrance to the city! Let his body be crucified as an example to all ambassadors!" But Princess Miriam exclaimed: "O Commander of the Faithful, do not soil the glory of your sword with this dog's blood! I will punish him myself!" With that she snatched the Christian ambassador's sword from its scabbard and, cutting off his head with a single stroke, cast it from the window. She spurned the body with her foot and signed to the slaves to drag it out.

Marvelling at her promptness, the khalifat put his own mantle upon her and dressed Nur in a robe of honour. He loaded them with rich presents and, when they expressed the desire, gave them a magnificent escort to Cairo and letters of recommendation both to the wali of Egypt and to the ulema. Thus Nur and Princess Miriam returned to the old folk in Egypt; and the merchant Crown became very proud when he saw his son come back thus royally married. He pardoned Nur for his previous conduct, and, in his honour, gave a feast to all the notables of Cairo, who

vied with each other in finding splendid gifts for the young couple.

For long years Nur and Miriam lived together in delight, stinting themselves nothing, eating well, drinking well, and fondling heavy, dry, and long. They were honoured in the midst of tranquillity until the Destroyer came to them, the Separator of friends, who overturns all palaces and towers, and gluts the hunger of the tomb. Glory be to the Only Living, who knows not death, who holds in His hands the keys of the Visible and Invisible! Amen.

When King Shahryar had heard this tale, he half rose and cried: "O Shahrazade, these heroic deeds have altogether delighted me!" Then he sank back among the cushions, saying: "I think, after that, you can have no more stories to tell me. I will reflect now concerning my duty to your head." "There is no time to be lost," said Shahrazade to herself, when she saw the king's eyebrows bending together; so aloud she cried: "This heroic tale is indeed admirable; but it is nothing to certain others which I would tell you, if you would give me leave." "What are you saying, Shahrazade?" asked the king, "What tales can these be, for you to imagine them more admirable than the last?" "The king shall judge for himself," replied Shahrazade with a smile, "For the moment, to pass the rest of our watch this night, I will only tell you a short and easy anecdote. It is taken from the Recitals of Generosity and Conduct."

At once she began:

THE RECITALS OF GEN-
EROSITY AND CONDUCT

SALADIN AND HIS WAZIR

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious king, that the wazir of the victorious Saladin had a young Christian boy among the number of his favourite slaves, who was so beautiful and tender that the eyes of all men loved him. One day, as the wazir was walking with this child, he was seen by Saladin and commanded to approach. The sultan, casting a delighted glance upon the boy, asked the wazir whence he came. "From Allah, my lord," answered the wazir a little uncomfortably. As Saladin went on his way, he smiled and said: "Now, O our wazir, you have found a way to control us by the beauty of a star and prison us in the enchantment of the moon."

This made the wazir reflect, and he said to himself: "I cannot keep this child now that the sultan has remarked him." So he prepared a rich present and called the Christian lad to him, saying: "O youth, I swear by Allah that I would never consent to be separated from you were it not necessary." Then he gave the boy the present, and added: "You will carry this to the sultan, and be yourself part of the present, for I give you up to our master." Lastly he gave him a note to hand to Saladin, on which were written these lines:

*I had a soul once, even I,
My lord,
But now unstarred and earthy it.
Here is a white moon for your sky,
My lord,
Because your sky is worthy it.*

This gift pleased Saladin intensely; and, as he was great-hearted by nature, he recompensed the wazir for his sacrifice by loading him with riches and favour, and making him feel on all occasions that the two were friends.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-fifteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT HAPPENED THAT the wazir soon afterwards acquired a most delightful and accomplished girl for his harem; and, from the moment she came, she drew his heart towards her. But, before he would allow himself to place his affection with her as he had placed it with the boy, he said to himself: "It is possible that the fame of this new pearl of mine will reach the sultan's ears. It will be better for me to send her to him as a gift before I grow to love her. The sacrifice will be less and the loss not so cruel." He called the girl to him and gave her a richer present than before, telling her to carry this to the sultan and to say that she herself was part of the gift. He also gave her, for Saladin, these lines traced on a piece of paper:

*Dear lord, there was a silver moon,
And a gold sun came after soon
Into the royal sky;
Now they will dance, a moon and sun,
In pretty constellation
To please a royal eye.*

For this the wazir's credit redoubled with Saladin, who lost no opportunity of showing his gratitude. Thus it was that the wazir soon had hosts of envious enemies, who tried to damage his credit in order to bring about his fall. With statements and hints they attempted to make Saladin believe that the wazir still had a great inclination towards the Christian boy and that, when the fresh breeze of the North brought memories of their old-time walks, he would desire the boy and call to him with all his soul. They let it be understood that he bitterly repented his gift, biting his nails and tearing at his teeth in spite. Instead of listening to these unworthy reports, Saladin, who had confidence in his wazir, cried angrily to the calumniators: "Let these cursed tongues be still or the heads which hold them shall answer for it!" Then, as he was also just, he added: "Nevertheless, I will put your lies to the proof, so that your barbs may return against you." He called the boy, and learning that he could write, said to him: "Take paper and pen, and write to my dictation." The boy therefore wrote, as if coming from himself, the following letter to the wazir:

"Old master of my love, you must know from your own feeling how great is my tenderness for you, how sweet the memory of our delights. I am sad in this palace; for nothing here can make me forget your goodness; and the majesty of the sultan prevents me from tasting his favours. I pray you find some way of taking me back; for the sultan has never been alone with me and you will find me as I was."

The sultan sent a little slave, who gave the letter to the wazir, saying: "The Christian lad, who was once yours, gave me this letter for you." The wazir took the letter, looked at it for a moment, and then, without unsealing it, wrote on the back:

*I, who am wise, will not be setting
My body whole
In lion's teeth, or lifting the red coal
Of cast regretting,
Or, having given my soul, bearing the fretting
Which is a soul.*

The sultan exulted when he had read this answer, and took care to recite it before the fallen faces of those envious others. He called the wazir to him and, after renewed assurance of friendship, asked him: "O father of wisdom, can you tell us how you come to have such control over yourself?" Then said the wazir: "I never let my passions come even to the threshold of my will."

But Allah knows all!

Then Shahrazade said: "Now, O auspicious king, that I have told you how a wise man's will may conquer his passion, I wish to tell you a story of passion itself." And she continued:

THE LOVERS' TOMB

ABDALLA, SON OF Al-Kaysi, tells this story in his writings.

He says:

I went one year on pilgrimage to the holy House of Allah and, when I had accomplished my rites, returned to pay a second visit to the tomb of the Prophet (upon whom be the prayer and blessing of Allah!). As I sat one night in a garden not far off from the tomb, I heard a voice singing sweetly in the silence, and gave all the attention of my charmed ears to its song:

*I am a nightingale singing of tears,
She is a dove who will not sing or say;
I am a lost black way,
She shines and disappears;
I am a night of fever years,
She is the day.*

Then came silence, and I was looking about me for this passionate singer when I saw him coming towards me, a youth of heart-ravishing beauty whose face was bathed in tears. I could not help crying: "By Allah, a most beautiful young man!" and stretching out my arms to him. He looked at me, and asked: "Who are you, and what do you want?" Bowing before his beauty, I answered: "What would one want of you save to look at you and give thanks to Allah? I am your slave, Abdalla bin Ma'amar Al-Kaysi, whose soul desires to know her lord. Your song has troubled me and the sight of you has carried me away. I would sacrifice my life for you!" The youth looked at me—oh, but his eyes were dark!—and bade me sit beside him. I came close, my spirit trembling within me, and he said: "Since your heart is concerned with me, I will tell you what has happened. I am Otbah, son of Al-Hubab, son of Al-Mundhir, son of Al-Jumah the Ansarite. Yesterday, as I made my devotions in the mosque of my tribe, many beautiful women came in, swaying with their hips, and guarding, as it were, a young girl whose every charm exceeded theirs, though they were altogether murderous in beauty. This moon came up to me without being noticed in the crowd, and said: 'Long, O Otbah, have I sought this opportunity to speak with you. Would you be married to one who loves you and desires you as a husband?' Before I could answer she disappeared and slipped away

among her companions, who took her with them outside the mosque and were lost in the crowd of pilgrims. Since then I have not been able to find her in spite of all my searchings; but my soul and my heart are with her and, even were I among the delights of paradise, I would know no pleasure without seeing her again."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-seventeenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HIS DOWNY CHEEKS glowed red as he spoke and my love glowed redder still; therefore I said to him: "O Otbah, O my cousin, put your hope in Allah and pray to Him to pardon your transgressions! I am ready to help you, with all my power and means, to find the girl; for my own soul is drawn towards the charm of you, and I would gladly do even more to see your eyes rest upon me with content." So saying I pressed him to me and kissed him as brother kisses brother; all night I calmed the trouble of his sweet soul; and those moments were delicious but unsatisfied.

Next morning, I took him to the mosque and made him enter before me. We waited until noon, at which hour the women had come before; but, to our grave disappointment, though the women came they had not the girl among them. Seeing my friend's despair I begged him to wait until I had questioned the other damsels. I went up to them and learned that the girl was a virgin of noble birth, one Rayya, daughter of

Al-Ghitrif, chief of the Bani-Sulaym. "O women of good omen," said I, "why has she not come with you today?" "How could she have come?" they answered, "Her father, who has given his protection to pilgrims across the desert from Irak to Mecca, returned yesterday with the riders of his tribe to the Euphrates, and took his daughter with him." I thanked the women for their news and returned to Otbah. "The tidings are not the best that I could wish," I said; and told him that Rayya had returned to her tribe with her father. "But, O Otbah, O my cousin," I added, "do not be down-hearted, for Allah has given me riches beyond counting and I am ready to spend them all to pleasure you. From this moment, I make your cause my own. Follow me, if you please." So he rose and followed me to the mosque of the Ansarites, which was his own mosque.

We waited until the congregation was full, and then I addressed the people in these words: "O Ansarite Believers here together, what is your considered opinion of Otbah and Otbah's father?" They answered with one voice: "He is of a noble family and a noble tribe among the Arabs." So I continued: "Know, then, that Otbah, son of Al-Hubab, is consumed by a violent passion. I have come to beg for your help in bringing about his happiness." "We shall be glad," said they; and I went on: "In that case you must come with me to the tents of the Bani-Sulaym, to the abode of their chief Al-Ghitrif, and ask the hand of his daughter for your cousin." Otbah and I and all that gallant assembly mounted our horses and rode without drawing rein until we reached the tents of the riders of Al-Ghitrif, where they had pitched them six days' journey across the desert.

When Al-Ghitrif saw us coming, he came to the

door of his tent to meet us; we greeted him and said: "O father of Arabs, we come to beg hospitality." "Be welcome beneath our tents, O noble guests!" he answered, and gave his slaves the necessary orders for our reception. The slaves spread mats and carpets in our honour, and sheep and camels were killed to make us a feast.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-eighteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

BUT WHEN THE moment came for sitting down to the feast, we refused; and I addressed the sheikh Al-Ghitrif in the name of all: "By the holy bond of bread and salt and by the faith of Arabs, we will not touch your meat until you have granted what we ask." "And what do you ask?" said Al-Ghitrif. "We have come," I answered, "to solicit the hand of your noble daughter, Rayya, for that brave, good, victorious, and illustrious young man, Otbah, son of Al-Hubab the Ansarite, son of Al-Mundhir, son of Al-Jamuh." The face and eyes of Rayya's father changed, but he answered calmly: "O brother Arabs, there is but one who can answer the demand of the illustrious Otbah; it is for her to speak. I will go to her now." So saying he rose from among us, very yellow in the face, with an anger burning him which gave the lie to his words.

When he found his daughter in her tent, she was frightened by his expression, and asked: "Why are you so angry, my father?" He sat down silently

beside her and then, as we heard afterwards, said to her: "I have given hospitality to the Ansarites, who have come to ask your hand in marriage for one of them." "The Ansarites are one of the noblest families of the Arabs," she answered, "your hospitality was fitting. Which of them wishes to marry me?" "Otbah, son of Hubab," he answered, and she exclaimed: "He is a known young man and worthy to mingle his blood with ours." But Al-Ghitrif cried out in a fury: "What are you talking about? Have you had anything to do with him? I have sworn to my brother to give you to his son; none but my nephew shall enter the direct line of my nobility." "Then what will you answer the Ansarites?" said she, "They are very noble Arabs and exceedingly punctilious on all matters of honour and precedence. If you refuse me to them, you will draw down their vengeance on you and all our tribe. They will think that you despise them, and never pardon you." "That is true," agreed her father, "but I will wrap up my refusal by asking an exorbitant dowry. The proverb says: 'It is easy not to marry a daughter if you ask enough for her.'"

He left the girl and returned to us, saying: "Dear guests, the daughter of our tribe makes no objection to the marriage, but she demands a dowry worthy of herself. Could any of you pay the price of this incomparable girl?" "I can!" cried Otbah; so Al-Ghitrif continued: "Very well, then, my daughter demands a thousand bracelets of red gold, five thousand golden dinars of Hajar coinage, a necklace of five thousand pearls, a thousand squares of Indian silk, a dozen pairs of yellow leather boots, ten sacks of Irak dates, a thousand head of cattle, a mare of the tribe, five chests of musk, five flasks of rose essence,

and five coffers of ambergris. Do you consent?" "I consent; O father of the Arabs," answered Otbah, "Nay, I will increase the list."

I returned to Medina with my friend, and we succeeded, after some difficulty, in gathering together all the things which had been demanded for the dowry. I spent my money freely and with more pleasure than if I had been buying for myself. We returned to the tents of the Bani-Sulaym and gave the things to Al-Ghitrif, so that the sheikh was obliged to receive as guests all the Ansarites who flocked together to make their compliments on the marriage of his daughter. The feasting went on for forty days and, during that time, numerous sheep and camels were killed and every variety of meat was kept simmering in large cauldrons, so that none might go hungry.

After the forty days we prepared a sumptuous palanquin on the back of two camels in file, and placed the new bride within it; then we joyfully set out, followed by a whole caravan of camels bearing presents. My dear friend, Otbah, exulted to think the day would soon come when he should be alone with his beloved; he never left her for a moment during our travels, except to come down out of the palanquin for a few minutes and delight me with his grateful conversation.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-nineteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

I REJOICED, AND said in my soul: "O Abdalla, you,

are Otbah's friend for ever! By denying yourself you have touched his heart; surely one day your sacrifice will be more than rewarded. One day you will know his love in its most desirable and exquisite form."

When we had only one day's march left us before Medina, we halted at night in a little oasis. Peace was there and the moon laughed down upon our joyful company; twelve palm trees stood slim above our heads and answered the song of the night wind with the rustle of their girlish leaves. Even as those who made the world of old, we rejoiced in the quiet hour, the cool water, the green sappy grass, and all the sweetness of the air. But, alas, even were a man winged he could not escape from Destiny. My friend, Otbah, was due to drink his cup to the lees, and at one draught. We were roused from our sleep by a terrible attack of armed riders, who fell upon us with cries of hate. These were men of the tribe of Bani-Sulaym, sent by Al-Ghitrif to carry back his daughter. He had not dared to violate the laws of hospitality under his own tents, but had waited, according to desert custom, to attack us after we had moved away. He counted without the valour of Otbah and our warriors. We met their assault with great valour and, after killing many of them, put the rest to flight. Yet Otbah, my friend, took a lance-thrust in the battle and, when he had dragged himself to camp, fell dead in my arms.

Young Rayya gave a great cry and fell across the body of her lover; she mourned all night, and in the morning we found her dead of a broken heart. May Allah take the two of them into His mercy! We dug a grave in the sand and buried them side by side; then we returned in deep grief to Medina. I finished

what I had to finish in that place and returned to my own country.

Seven years later, desire came to me to go on pilgrimage once more and my soul yearned to visit the tomb of Otbah and Rayya. When I came to the grave, I found it shaded by a fair tree of an unknown kind, which the Ansarites had piously planted. I sat down weeping upon a stone in the shadow of the tree, and said to those who were with me: "My friends, tell me the name of that tree which weeps with me over the grave of Otbah and Rayya?" And they answered: "It is the Tree of Lovers." Dear Otbah, would that I rested with you in the peace of God beneath the shadow of that tree!

Such is the tale of the Lovers' Tomb, O auspicious King, said Shahrazade; and then, as she saw King Shahryar saddened by her story, she hastened to tell him of the marriage and divorce of Hind.

THE DIVORCE OF HIND

IT IS RELATED that young Hind, daughter of Al-Neman, was the most beautiful child of her time; she had borrowed her eyes, together with her slimness and lightness, from the gazelles of Allah. The fame of her reached the ears of Al-Hajjaj, governor of Irak, and he asked for her in marriage. Her father would only let her go for a dowry of two hundred thousand silver dirhams to be paid before marriage, and a further two hundred thousand to be paid in case of divorce. Al-Hajjaj accepted these conditions and took Hind to his house.

Now the governor of Irak, to his great grief, was quite impotent. He had come into the world with

an emasculating deformity and internal obstructions; and, being thus deformed, had refused to draw the breath of life, until the devil appeared to his mother in human form and advised her to rear him on the blood of two black goats, a black buck, and a black snake. The mother followed this prescription and the child lived; but deformity and impotence, which are the gifts of Shaitan and not of Allah, stayed with him always.

For a long time after he had taken her to his house, Al-Hajjaj did not dare to approach Hind except by day; nor would he touch her in spite of his great desire to do so. Hind soon understood the reason for this conduct and lamented her case before her women.

One day Al-Hajjaj came to feast his eyes upon her beauty as was his custom; she stood with her back turned to the door, looking at herself in a little mirror, and singing:

*Oh, take away this purple dress
And robe me in my camel's-hair;
For I am of flaming Arab blood
Am mated to but half a man.*

*The flutes are in the wilderness,
The black tents of my tribe are there;
Oh, save me from the multitude,
In sable death's own caravan.*

When Al-Hajjaj heard Hind call him half a man, he left the chamber, a prey to sharp disappointment, without his wife having noticed either his arrival or departure. He sent for the kadi, Abdalla bin Tahir, to divorce him; and Abdalla appeared before Hind, saying: "O daughter of Al-Neman, Al-Hajjaj Abu Muhamad sends you these two hundred thou-

sand dirhams and has charged me to carry out the formalities of divorce in his name." Then cried Hind: "Thanks, O thanks to Allah! My vow is lifted and I am free to return to my father's house! O son of Tahir, you could have announced no better news than my liberation from this importunate dog. Keep the two hundred thousand dirhams as a reward for your most auspicious tidings."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-twentieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SOON AFTERWARDS, the khalifat Abd Al-Malik bin Marwan heard tell of Hind's incomparable beauty and wit, and sent to woo her for his wife. She answered him by a letter in which, after praise to Allah and respectful greeting, she said: "O Commander of the Faithful, a dog has dirtied the platter by sniffing at it with his nose." The khalifat read this letter with shouts of laughter, and sent the following reply: "O Hind, if the dog has dirtied the platter, we will wash it seven times and then purify it by the use to which we put it."

Hind saw that the khalifat still desired her in spite of the difficulty, so she accepted him on one condition. This condition she wrote in a letter, as follows: "O Commander of the Faithful, I will only set out on my journey to come to you if Al-Hajjaj walks bare-foot beside my camel and leads it all the way."

The khalifat laughed even more and sent an order

to Al-Hajjaj that he should lead Hind's camel by the bridle. The governor of Irak dared not disobey this unpleasant order, so he went bare-footed to Hind's dwelling and took hold of her camel by the bridle. Hind mounted into her litter and all along the road made delightful game of her camel-boy. She said to her nurse: "Nurse, open the curtains of the palanquin a little." The nurse put aside the curtains, and Hind threw a golden dinar down into the mud. Then she leant out and cried to him who had been her husband: "O chancellor, please will you pick up that silver piece?" Al-Hajjaj picked up the coin and returned it to Hind, saying: "It is a gold dinar, not a silver piece." Hind laughed, and replied: "Glory be to Allah, who can change silver into gold in spite of the mud into which it has fallen!" Hajjaj recognised another humiliation in these words and became red with angry shame; but he lowered his head and stifled his resentment; for Hind was now the bride of the khalifat.

When she had made an end of this little tale, Shahrazade fell silent, and King Shahryar said: "These anecdotes are very pleasant, Shahrazade. Now I should like to hear some altogether marvellous story. If you do not know one, tell me so at once." But Shahrazade cried: "Was there ever a more marvellous tale than the one I have in mind to tell you now? Is it permitted?" "It is permitted," answered Shahryar.

THE STRANGE TALE OF
THE MIRROR OF VIRGINS

AND SHAHRAZADE SAID TO KING SHAHRYAR:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious and high-minded king, that there was once, in the antiquity of time and the passage of the age and of the moment, a sultan in the city of Bassora, whose name was Zeyn. He was an admirable youth, delightful to look upon, generous and valiant, noble and powerful; but, in spite of those gifts which set him above his time, he was a reckless prodigal and expert dissipater of gold, who, by large gifts to his greedy young favourites, by expenses on women of every hue and size, and by continual purchase of new virgins at exorbitant prices, had at last exhausted even the immense treasures laid up by his warlike ancestors. One day his wazir kissed the earth between his hands, announcing that the chests of gold were empty and that there was not wherewithal to pay for the refreshment of the morrow; then, fearing that the stake would be his portion for such unwelcome news, he retired as quickly as he might.

When the young sultan learnt that all his riches were consumed, he repented that he had not set aside a portion for the black days of destiny. He grew very sad, and said to himself: "Nothing remains to you, O Zeyn, except secret flight. You must leave the favourites whom you love, your girl mistresses, your women, your affairs of state; you must abandon the throne of your fathers to whomsoever comes to take it. It is better to be a beggar upon the road of Allah than a penniless and disrespected king. The proverb says: *The grave is a finer place than poverty.*" Revolving

such thoughts as these, he waited for nightfall to disguise himself and slip from the palace. He was about to take up a staff and depart upon his way, when Allah, the All-seer, the All-hearer, brought back into his mind the last recommendation of his father. Before dying, the old king had said to him: "Above all do not forget, my son, that, should Fate turn against you on any day, you will find a treasure in my Hall of Manuscripts, which will enable you to make head against all misfortune."

Zeyn had forgotten these words, but now he remembered them and ran to the Hall of Manuscripts. He opened the door and entered, trembling with joy; but the more he looked and moved and examined, the more he overturned papers and registers, and muddled the annals of the reign, the less did he find gold or the smell of gold, silver or the smell of silver, or anything which looked at all like a precious stone. His breast could not contain his despair when he found nothing; he began to crumple and hurl the records of his ancestors in all directions and was stamping them under his feet in rage when he suddenly felt an object of hard metal beneath them. He drew this forth, and, finding it to be a heavy casket of red copper, hastened to open it. Inside was nothing but a small piece of parchment, sealed with his father's seal. Though Zeyn felt very disappointed, he opened the message and read these words: "Take a pickaxe, my son, and go to such and such a part of the palace; dig in the earth and trust in Allah."

Then said Zeyn: "It seems that I am to be a labourer and not a beggar. Yet it is my father's will and I must not disobey." He went down into the garden, and, taking a pickaxe from against the wall

of the gardener's house, carried it to the place mentioned in the message, a cellar which stretched below the palace.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-twenty-first Night
Had Come*

LITTLE DONIAZADE ROSE from her carpet, crying: "Your words are very sweet and fresh and savoury, dear sister." Shahrazade kissed the little one between the eyes, and answered: "They are nothing to those which I would give you to hear tonight, if our wise and exquisitely-mannered king permitted it." "I permit it," said Shahryar; and Shahrazade thus continued:

Zeyn took a lighted torch into the cellar and, by its illumination, began to tap the flooring with the handle of his pickaxe. When he discovered a place which gave back a hollow sound, he began to dig strongly and removed several of the paving stones without finding the least sign of treasure. Therefore he leaned against the wall and said to himself: "Since when has a king had to follow his destiny into the bowels of the earth, instead of calmly and unlaboriously waiting for it?" Nevertheless, when he had recovered his breath, he continued rather hopelessly to remove the squares, until he came at length upon a heavy slab of white stone hidden beneath them. He lifted this and found under it a trap door fastened down by steel locks. He broke the locks with his pickaxe and opened the door.

He found himself at the top of a magnificent white marble stairway which descended into a vast square hall, built of white Chinese porcelain and crystal. The ceilings and the columns of this hall were of sky blue lazulite. When he came down into it, he saw that it contained four tables of nacre, upon each of which stood ten great urns, alternate porphyry and alabaster. "I wonder what those jars contain," said he, "Probably my dead father filled them with old wine. If so it should, by now, be supremely excellent to drink." He mounted on one of the tables and lifted its lid from an urn. O surprise! O joy! O dance! It was filled to the brim with gold dust. Zeyn plunged in his hand without being able to reach the bottom of the jar, and brought it out gilded and rippling as if with sunlight. He lifted the lid from a second urn and found it crammed with dinars of gold and golden sequins. He examined each of the remaining forty urns and found that those of alabaster were all filled with gold dust, and that their porphyry sisters were heavy with dinars and gold sequins.

Zeyn trembled, expanded, blossomed with delight; he sang for joy and thrust the torch into a niche of the crystal wall; he pulled one of the alabaster urns towards him and let the gold dust run down over his head, over his shoulders, over his belly; he bathed with greater delight than he had ever known in the most delicate hammam. "Sultan Zeyn, Sultan Zeyn," he cried, "Do you remember that you were about to take a beggar's staff and wander upon the roads of Allah? Lo, this golden blessing has descended on your head because you trusted in the Giver's generosity and did not hoard His gifts! Refresh your eyes, calm your dear soul; fearlessly spend this second treasure and trust in Him!" As he was speaking

he had tilted the contents of all the alabaster urn on to the porcelain floor; next, from the urns of porphyry, he poured tinkling showers of dinars and sequins upon the heap of bright dust, until the urns were exhausted and the harmonious crystal walls had ceased their echo. Finally he plunged like a lover into this gold heap, while the torchlight splashed all the polished hall of white and blue with yellow stars and flames from the bosom of that cold golden fire.

When the young sultan had bathed in this gold and thus forgotten the misery which had threatened him, he rose, shining like a gold boy, and examined every detail of the hall with the utmost curiosity. He marvelled most that his father had been able to hollow out and build the place so secretly that none had heard of it. At last his eyes noticed in a small corner, tucked away between two slim crystal columns, a little coffer, like, but much smaller than, the one he had found in the Hall of Manuscripts.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-twenty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE OPENED IT and found a jewelled key wrought in gold. "Perhaps this key opens the locks which I broke," said he, "but, if that be so, how were they locked from the outside? This must be the key to something else." He examined all the walls very carefully and soon found, in one of the china panels,

a keyhole, into which he inserted the key. He tried it and it turned. A door opened and led him into a second and more marvellous hall. It was made entirely of green earthenware with a gold gloss, so that he seemed to be in the hollow heart of a sea emerald. There was no decoration in this chamber, but, in the middle, under the dome, six girls stood silent on pedestals of solid gold and shone from themselves as if they had been made of moonlight. Zeyn went towards them in his surprise, to see them better and to greet them; but he found that they were not living and had each been carved out of a single diamond.

“Where in Allah’s name can my father have got such things?” cried Zeyn. He examined the girls more closely and saw that they ringed a seventh pedestal on which was no diamond girl, but a piece of silk which bore this message in coloured threads:

My son, these diamond girls cost me many pains to get; but, though they are beautiful, you must not think that they are the most beautiful. There is a seventh girl, infinitely brighter and fairer, who is worth more than a thousand of the others. If you wish to see that seventh and place her upon the waiting pedestal, a labour of love from which my death prevented me, you must go to the city of Cairo. There you will easily find an old faithful slave of mine, called Mubarak. Tell him what has happened and he will lead you to the place of the incomparable seventh girl. You will acquire her and rejoice your eyes for ever. The blessing of Allah be upon you, O Zeyn!

When he read these words, the young sultan said to himself: “I will go to Cairo without delay, for the seventh girl must be wonderful indeed if she is worth a thousand of the others.” He left the under-

ground hall and, returning with a basket, carried some of the dinars and gold sequins to his own apartment. He worked late into the night, journeying to and fro unseen, until a goodly pile of the gold lay ready to his hand. Then he locked the door of the vault and retired to bed.

Next morning he called his wazirs, emirs, and the nobles of his kingdom, and told them that he intended to go into Egypt for a change of air. He appointed his grand-wazir, the old man who had feared the stake for his unwelcome news, to govern the kingdom during his absence. Then he departed without ceremony, attended only by a small band of chosen slaves and, by Allah's grace, arrived without adventure at the city of Cairo.

He could find no one of the name of Mubarak save the syndic of the markets, a very rich merchant who lived generously in a palace, the gates of which were ever open to the poor. Sultan Zeyn had himself conducted to this palace, where he was greeted by many slaves and eunuchs. These led him across a vast courtyard into a magnificent hall, where Mubarak waited upon a silken couch. As Zeyn approached, the old man rose in his honour and begged him to be seated, saying: "Dear master, blessing has come into my house!" He spoke in friendly fashion to his guest on this and that, without being so rude as to ask his name or the reason of his coming. "O my host," said Zeyn, "I have come from Bassora seeking one Mubarak, a faithful slave of the dead king, my father. I am called Zeyn; I am the present Sultan of Bassora."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-twenty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

MUBARAK ROSE FROM his couch and threw himself at Zeyn's feet, crying: "Praise be to Allah who has brought master and slave together! Speak and I shall hear! I was your dead father's slave. The man who has a son does not die. O son of my master, this palace is your palace, and I am yours." Zeyn raised Mubarak and told him the whole story of his adventure. But nothing would be gained by repeating it in this place. "So you see," he added, "I have come to Egypt that you may help me to find the seventh diamond girl." "I am ready in all loyalty," answered Mubarak, "I am still a slave; my life and my goods belong to you. But before we set out in search of this diamond girl, my lord, it would be better for you to repose after your journey and allow a feast to be given in your honour." "You say that you are a slave," objected Zeyn, "but you are free, because I make you so. You say that I had better rest, but I am not tired. Let us set out at once." Seeing that the prince's mind was made up, Mubarak kissed the ground before him a second time, in sign of thanks for his freedom, and then rose, saying: "Have you reflected on the dangers which we may encounter, my lord? The diamond girl is in the palace of the Old Man of the Three Isles; and the Three Isles are forbidden to all who do not know the right conjuration. I am one of the few who may enter, but the undertaking is dangerous." "I am ready for all danger in this quest," answered the prince, "My breast is

puffed with courage; I will seek the Old Man of the Three Isles."

Mubarak ordered his slaves to make preparation, and the two departed after ablution and prayer; for many days and nights they rode across plains and deserts, and over meadowland filled only by grass and the presence of God. Their eyes met ceaseless novelty upon the way and their surroundings were more strange as they advanced. They came at last to a prairie of inviting freshness, where Mubarak turned to the slaves, saying: "You will wait here, guarding the horses and the food, until we return." Then he begged Zeyn to follow him, and said: "My lord, there is no might or help save in Allah! We are now on the threshold of those forbidden lands which hold your diamond girl. We must go on alone and without hesitation. We must be strong." After walking for a long time, they came to the foot of a high mountain which barred all the horizon with its bulk.

"What power will take us over this mountain, Mubarak? Who will give us wings to reach its top?" asked the prince; and Mubarak replied: "We have no need of climbing or of wings." He took from his pocket an old book in which unknown characters were traced backwards, looking like the feet of ants; from this he read verses in a strange tongue before the mountain, waving his head from side to side the while. As soon as he had finished, the mountain rolled back on both sides, splitting in the middle and leaving a passage broad enough for one man. Mubarak entered this first and went forward resolutely, leading the prince by the hand. After an hour of terrible journey they came to the other end of the split; and, as soon as they had gone out from it, the mountain came to-

gether again. So perfect was the join that it left no crack for the point of a needle.

They found themselves on the borders of a lake as great as the sea; and far off upon it were three green islands. The shore on which the two adventurers stood was gay with flowers and trees which bent over to smile into the water; birds made melody among scented shrubs, and the heart was uplifted by that place.

Mubarak sat down and said to Zeyn: "My lord, those islands are our destination." "But how can we reach them?" asked Zeyn. "Take no thought for that," the other answered, "They are as fair as the gardens of Allah and soon a boat will come to take us to them. Only, my lord, I must beg you to make no sign of astonishment at whatever you may see. Above all, be very careful not to start back, even if the boatman takes some unexpected shape. Finally, if you say a word after we have gone on board, the boat will carry us both beneath the waves." "I will keep my tongue between my teeth," answered Zeyn earnestly, "I will imprison any surprise within my soul."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-twenty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AS THEY WERE speaking, a boat appeared so close to them upon the lake that they did not know whether it had come up out of the bosom of the water or floated

down from the sky above. It was made all of red sandal-wood; its cordage was of silk, and it had a mast of fine amber. The sailor in charge wore the body of a man, but his head was an elephant's head, with two great ears falling and dragging on the ground like Hagar's train. The boat stopped five yards from the shore, and the elephant-headed boatman lifted each of the companions in his trunk and set them, light as feathers, in his vessel. Then he plunged his trunk into the water and, using it as oar and rudder both, put off from the shore. He raised his great ears, and gave them to the wind above his head, so that they bellied out as if they had been sails. He kept turning them to catch the breeze and sent the vessel forward across the lake like a large bird. When they had come close to one of the islands, he took his two passengers again in his trunk and, after setting them gently upon the sand, put out and disappeared.

Mubarak took the prince by the hand again and led him into the interior of the island, following a path paved with jewels of every colour. They walked forward until they came to a magnificent palace built up of emeralds, surrounded by a moat, whose outer bank was planted at intervals with trees so tall that they shaded the whole building. Access to a great door of solid gold was given by a tortoiseshell bridge, six fathoms long and three broad.

Not daring to cross this bridge, Mubarak halted and said to the prince: "We can go no further. If we wish to see the Old Man of the Three Isles we must make a magic conjuration." He drew four bands of yellow silk from beneath his robe and, keeping two himself, gave two to the prince. When he had fastened one band round his waist and placed one on his

back, he bade Zeyn do the like. Then, drawing two light silk prayer-rugs from the same receptacle, he spread them out on the ground and sprinkled grains of musk and amber upon them, while he muttered incantations. Finally he seated himself cross-legged on one of the rugs and, when the prince had occupied the other, said to him: "I will now call upon the Old Man of the Three Isles. God grant that he be not angry when he comes! For I must confess I am not at all sure how he will receive us. If he be not pleased by our coming he is capable of appearing as a horrible monster; if, on the other hand, he is glad of our visit he will assume the form of a very charming old man. In whatever shape he arrives, you must rise in his honour, without leaving your rug, and greet him most respectfully. Then you must say: 'O powerful master, O king of kings, behold we have entered into the majesty of your jurisdiction and passed through the door of your protection. I am your slave, Zeyn, sultan of Bassora, son of that king whom the Angel of Death has carried into the peace of our Lord. I come to solicit of your power and generosity the same favours which you accorded to your servant, my father.' Then, if he asks you what you wish, you will answer: 'My lord, I wish the seventh diamond girl.' " "I will remember," answered Zeyn.

Mubarak began to make conjuration, fumigation, recitation, adjuration, and incantation, until the sun was covered by a shield of black cloud, from which sprang a red tongue of lightning, followed by a clap of thunder. A furious wind blew towards them and in it they heard a terrible crying; the earth trembled as it will tremble upon the last day when Israfel shall shake it apart.

Zeyn was very frightened by these things, though

he would not let his terror show. "It is a bad sign," he said to himself; but Mubarak read his thought and smiled, saying: "On the contrary, the omens are excellent; all goes well, by Allah's grace."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-twenty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

EVEN AS HE spoke, the Old Man of the Three Isles appeared before them in venerable human form, but so beautiful that he might only be surpassed by Him to whom all beauty and all power belong. He went up to Zeyn, smiling as a father smiles upon his son; and the prince rose in his honour upon the rug and bowed to the earth before him. He made those compliments and greetings which Mubarak had advised and then explained the object of his coming to the isle.

The old man smiled even more pleasantly, and then said: "I loved your father very greatly. Each time he came to visit me I gave him a diamond girl and had her carried to Bassora myself, lest the camel-boys should damage her. But you must not think that I have any less friendship for you, O Zeyn. It was without solicitation that I promised your father to protect you and persuaded him to write those two messages which you found. I am very ready to give you the seventh diamond girl, who is worth a thousand of the others, but I ask for something in exchange." "As Allah lives, my lord, all that is mine is yours," answered Zeyn, "and I include myself in saying all

that is mine." "But what I ask is not an easy thing, my child," returned the old man with a smile, "I do not think that you will ever be able to find it. . . . I require you to bring me a girl of fifteen who is at once beautiful and a virgin." "If that is all you wish, my lord," cried Zeyn, "the thing is easy. There is nothing commoner in our land than beautiful virgins of fifteen."

At this the old man laughed so heartily that he fell over on his backside; when he had a little recovered from his mirth, he said: "Are they so easily found?" "I can bring you ten such," answered Zeyn, "I have already had hundreds of such girls in my palace and much enjoyed depriving them of their quality." The old man laughed again and then said with a most pitying glance: "My child, what I demand is so rare that no one has been able to satisfy me yet. If you thought that the girls you had were virgins, you were the more mistaken. Women have a thousand ways of creating belief in an insignia which is not there; they have fooled the greatest tumblers of all time. As I see that you know nothing about such things, I will furnish you with a certain means of testing a girl's state, without her knowledge, without touching her, without undressing her. This is important, as the virgin I want must never have been handled by a male or shown herself to the eye of man."

"By Allah, he is mad!" said Zeyn to himself, "If it is as difficult to tell a maiden as he pretends, how can it be done without seeing or touching?" He reflected for quite a while, and then cried: "I see it now! I will be able to tell them by their smell." "Virginity has no smell," answered the old man smiling. "By looking them straight in the eye, then," cried Zeyn again. "An eye has no virginity," said

the old man. "How then am I to tell, my lord?" asked Zeyn; and the other answered: "That is just what I have promised to show you."

He then disappeared from their eyes and returned in a moment carrying a mirror in his hands. "O Zeyn," said he, "I ought to tell you that it is impossible for a simple man to know whether a woman is pierced or a virgin; that is a knowledge belonging only to Allah or His Elect. As I cannot pass on my skill in this matter, I give you a mirror, which is a surer judge than any human. When you find a girl of fifteen, whose beauty is perfect and whom you either suppose or have been told to be a virgin, look in this mirror and you will see her naked image. Have no fear of gazing upon it, for only a direct glance from man destroys virginity. If the girl be not a virgin, her history will appear to you great and yawning like a gulf, and the mirror become stained as with fog. But if Allah has kept the child untouched you will see her simple reflection, and the mirror remain pure and untarnished."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-twenty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE OLD MAN gave the magic mirror to Zeyn, adding: "I hope that Destiny will allow you to find the fifteen-year-old girl whom I require. Do not forget that she must be entirely beautiful; for virginity means nothing without beauty. Also, take great care

of the mirror, for its loss would bring misfortune upon you." Zeyn reassured the Old Man of the Three Isles, and, after taking leave of him, accompanied Mubarak to the lake. The man with the elephant's head conveyed them across the water in his boat; the mountain opened to let them pass; they found the slaves in charge of their horses, and returned without adventure to Cairo.

Prince Zeyn consented to rest for some days in Mubarak's palace from the fatigues and emotions of their quest. "Surely the Old Man of the Isles is very simple," he thought, "to give that diamond girl in exchange for a human virgin. Does he imagine that there are no maidens left on earth?" When he was rested, he called Mubarak to him, and said: "Let us rise up now and go to Baghdad and Bassora, where little virgins are as many as locusts. We will choose the fairest of them all and exchange her for the diamond girl." "Why go so far, my lord?" answered Mubarak, "Are we not in Cairo, the city of cities, the dwelling of wit, the preferred meeting place of the world's beauty? Take no further thought for the search; I myself will undertake it." "How?" asked the prince, and the other continued: "I know a crafty old woman who is very expert in the matter of little virgins; she will find us what we want. I will bid her bring together all the fifteen-year-olds in Egypt and make a first choice of them, so that our task may be easier. I will promise her a generous commission and, whether the parents consent or no, she will leave no child untried in all Egypt. We will only have to choose the fairest Egyptian from her choice; if she is common we will buy her, if she is of noble family, we will ask her hand in marriage, and you can wed her in name alone. Then we will go to Damascus,

Baghdad, and Bassora; and, after testing the virginity of our candidates in the mirror, either purchase or marry those who most strike us with their beauty. When we have collected all that is fairest from each city, we can make a final choice with the assurance of having found the greatest marvel of our time." "Your plan is excellent!" exclaimed Zeyn, "Your wisdom is only equalled by your eloquence."

Mubarak sought out the unparalleled old bawd of whom he had spoken—she could have taught subtlety to the Devil—and, after giving her a large commission in advance, told her his requirement. "The girl is destined to wed my master's son," he said, "therefore you need have no fear for your reward." "Calm your heart and refresh your eyes, dear master," answered the old woman, "I will consecrate my life to the finding. Also I have several fifteen-year-old virgins on my lists, all of incomparable beauty and noble birth. When I bring them before you one by one, I warrant you will find it hard to choose out the most excellent moon in that array."

Thus spake the old woman in her ignorance of the mirror; and set out confidently to haunt the roads and avenues of her experience. She lost no time in bringing a first choice of fifteen-year-old girls to Mubarak's palace; and led them in one by one, covered in veils and modestly casting down their eyes, to the hall where Zeyn and Mubarak sat with the mirror. If you had seen all those lowered eyes, candid faces, and little shy figures, you could not have doubted the purity of any; but none of these things deceived the mirror. Zeyn looked in the glass each time that a girl passed before him, and her reflection appeared naked to his eyes. Every part of her body was visible; each detail of her little history

was thrown into relief as if it had been presented to him in a casket of diaphanous crystal.

As each girl passed poor Zeyn was far from finding that purity for which he was seeking; it astounded him to think into what gulfs his unaided judgment might have thrown the unfortunate Old Man of the Isles. As he did not wish to bring shame on any by discovering that which Allah had hidden, he never told the old woman the cause of his dissatisfaction, but contented himself with wiping the fog off the mirror. Spurred by the hope of gain and not in the least discouraged by her first failure, the old woman brought a second choice, a third and a fourth and a fifth; but the result was always the same. Multitudes and multitudes of Egyptian girls you saw, O Zeyn, of Coptish girls, of Nubian, Abyssinian, and Soudanese; of Moroccan girls, of Arab and Bedouin; thousands of girls in every way beautiful and delightful; but never one that looked at all like her whom you sought!

After this disappointment the prince and Mubarak journeyed into Syria and hired a magnificent palace in the fairest quarter of Damascus. Mubarak entered into negotiations with all the old women whose business was with marriage and the like; and these old women, on their part, entered into negotiations with every kind of little girl, tall and short, Mussulman, Jew, and Christian. Knowing nothing of the magic mirror, they confidently brought their candidates into the hall where Zeyn waited; but, for all their modest mien, unsullied looks, quick blushing cheeks, and fifteen years, the Syrians were no more successful than the Egyptians. The old women were obliged to retire one after the other, trailing their noses to the ground.

"It is extraordinary," thought Zeyn; and to Mubarak, he said: "This does not seem to be the country for our purpose. Let us try elsewhere. I cannot rest for thinking of the diamond girl and I will in no wise give up my search." "I do not think that anything will be gained by going elsewhere than Irak," answered Mubarak, "There, surely, we shall find what we require. Let us prepare the caravan and depart for Baghdad, the City of Peace."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-twenty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ALLAH HAD DECREED that Mubarak and the prince should arrive safely in Baghdad, without meeting robbers on the way. As in Damascus, their first care was to hire a palace; the one which they chose stood upon the Tigris and had a garden like the khalifat's Garden of Delights. They collected a large train of slaves and kept up a daily display of hospitality to all and sundry, ever distributing the broken meats among the poor. Now there was in that quarter a certain imam named Abu Bakr who was a vile and common man, hating the rich simply because he was poor. Misery hardens a base heart, just as it ennobles a lofty heart. When he saw an abundance of Allah's gifts blessing the cloth of the new comers, he took them in aversion. One day, he went to the mosque for afternoon prayer and stood among the assembled

people, crying: "O Believers, it is my duty to inform you that we have two strangers in our quarter, who ostentatiously spend great sums of money every day, simply to offend the eyes of the poor. We do not know these strangers; we do not know for certain that they are robbers who have come to spend in Baghdad the vast sums which they have stolen from the widow and orphan of their own country. But I adjure you, in the name of Allah and by the merits of our lord Muhamad (upon whom be prayer and peace!) to be on your guard against them and not to accept any of their false hospitality. For I am sure that, if our master the khalifat learnt that there were such men in our quarter, he would hold us responsible for their ill doing, and chastise us because we sent him no warning. I wash my hands of the matter; I will have nothing to do with the strangers or with those who accept their bounty." "You are right, O Abu Bakr!" replied the congregation with one voice, "We will send a complaint to the khalifat and he shall enquire into their antecedents." Then the people came out of the mosque, and the imam returned to his own house to meditate a means of harming the two strangers.

Mubarak soon learned what had happened at the mosque, and began to dread the threats of Abu Bakr, believing that, if the news became noised abroad, it would frighten away the old women. Therefore he put five hundred golden dinars into a bag and went to the imam's house. Abu Bakr opened to his knocking and crossly asked him what he wished. "O Abu Bakr, O our master the imam," answered the visitor, "I am Mubarak, your slave. I come to you from the emir Zeyn, who has heard of your great learning, piety, and vast influence in the city;

he wishes me to present his homage and say that he places himself entirely at your service. As a mark of good will, he sends this purse of five hundred dinars, as one loyally making a gift to his sovereign; and wishes to be excused for the smallness of the present when compared with the worth of the receiver. But, if Allah wishes, he will be able in the future to prove in some more substantial way the force of his obligation. He feels that he is lost in the boundless desert of your benevolence."

When Abu Bakr saw the purse and had made sure of the contents, his eyes became very soft, and he answered: "Dear Lord, I humbly implore pardon from the emir, your master, for any unconsidered language which I may have used about him. I repent most bitterly if I have at all been lacking in respect for him. Dear friend, I pray you to be my mouthpiece to speak to him of my contrition, my readiness to serve in anything. Today I shall repair in public my quite accidental fault; and thus, I trust, earn a little of the emir's regard." Then said Mubarak: "I praise Allah for that He has filled your heart with good intent towards us, O Abu Bakr, our master! I beg you not to forget to honour our threshold with a visit, after the prayer, and ennoble the minds of us with your society. We know well, the emir Zeyn and I, that blessing will accompany your holy feet into our poor dwelling." So saying, he kissed the imam's hand and returned to the palace.

Abu Bakr went again to the mosque and cried among the Faithful: "O all Believers, O my brothers, there is none, however noble, who has no enemy; envy fastens like an asp to the feet of those whom Allah has blessed. I stand before you today in order

to free my conscience and assure you that the strangers, about whom I spoke yesterday with so little knowledge of my subject, are both, by a singular chance, endowed with a great nobility, exquisite tact, every virtue, and inestimable qualities of soul. The enquiries I have made have proved to me that one of them is an emir of exceedingly high rank, whose presence is an honour to our quarter. I call upon you to reverence these two strangers when you meet them, and to accord them the great respect which is their due. The peace of Allah be upon you!"

Thus Abu Bakr destroyed the effects of his first speech, and then hastened to change into a new robe, whose skirts trailed upon the ground and whose sleeves fell nobly to his knees. Thus adorned, he made his way to Zeyn's palace and entered the reception hall.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-twenty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE BOWED to the earth before the prince, who answered his greeting with great cordiality and bade him be seated beside him upon the diwan. Food and drink were served, and Mubarak joined in the eating and drinking. All three talked together like old friends. Delighted by the prince's geniality, the imam said: "O my lord Zeyn, do you think of lighting our city with a long visit?" Now, in spite

of his youth, the prince was shrewd and quick to seize an advantage; so he replied: "My intention is to remain in Baghdad until my object is accomplished." "And what is your noble object?" asked Abu Bakr, "Your slave would be delighted to help you in any way, for he is quite devoted to your interests." Then said Prince Zeyn: "My object is marriage, O venerable sheikh. I want to find a girl of fifteen at once entirely beautiful and quite a virgin. Her beauty must be without its equal among the youth of her time, she must be quite immaculate both within and without. I came to Baghdad to find such a one, after having searched in Egypt and Syria without success." "Such things are rare and very difficult to find," said the imam, "If Allah had not set me in your path, your stay would have been endless and the old women would have spent their time in vain. But I know exactly where such a pearl may be found; I will tell you, if you will allow me."

Zeyn and Mubarak both smiled at this. "O holy imam," said the former, "are you sure of the virginity of the girl you mention? And if so, how are you sure? If you have seen that thing in the girl, she is no longer a virgin in my sense; for true virginity resides as much in keeping itself invisible as in keeping it unsullied." "Indeed, I have not seen it myself," answered the imam, "but I will cut off my right hand if it be not as I say. Also, my lord, how can you or any man be certain before the marriage night?" "That is easy," said Zeyn, "I have but to look at her for one moment, dressed and veiled." Out of respect for his host the imam did not wish to laugh, but he answered: "Our master must be more than ordinarily skilled in the science of reading faces, if he can determine the virginity of a strange

girl by regarding her through her veil." "Yet it is as I say," retorted Zeyn, "If it be possible, let me see the girl; I will reward your services at their just value." "I hear and I obey!" replied the imam; and at once set out upon his quest.

Abu Bakr had told the truth when he said that he knew of a girl who would meet the prince's requirement. She was the daughter of the chief of the imams of Baghdad; her father had brought her up far from the eyes of men, in simple seclusion as the Book commands. She had blossomed like a flower in his home, having never looked upon ugliness. She was white and elegant, she had come without flaw from the mould of beauty; her eyes were black, her little hands and feet were fragments of the moon. She had all the grace of a circle on one side and of a straight line on the other. Never had the sun shone upon a more lovely flower. Certainly, if here were not purity then such a thing could not exist. Perhaps Zeyn's search was to be at last rewarded.

Abu Bakr made his way to the house of his chief and, after the usual greetings, made him a long speech, sprinkled with texts, on the advisability of marrying little girls as soon as they were ripe. He explained the whole situation, and thus concluded: "This emir is noble, rich, and generous, ready to pay any dowry. He makes only one condition: that he shall first look upon the child for a moment when she is dressed and veiled and covered with the izar." The girl's father reflected for an hour, and then said: "I see no objection." He called his wife, and said to her: "O mother of Latifa, rise up now and take our daughter and walk with her behind Abu Bakr, our good son; for he will lead you to a palace where Fate awaits the child."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-thirtieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE WIFE of the sheikh of the imams veiled herself and sought her daughter, saying: "O Latifa, your father wishes you to see the streets for the first time today." When she had combed and dressed the child, she went out with her and followed ten paces behind Abu Bakr to the palace, where Zeyn and Mubarak waited in the reception hall. O Latifa, you went in with wide dark eyes, astonished above their little veil. You had never seen a man, save your venerable father; and you did not lower your eyes, for you knew not false modesty or false shame, or any of those false things by which girls learn to take the hearts of men. You were shy but you looked straight forth with your black eyes, so that Zeyn's reason fled from him. He had never seen even the shadow of your beauty among the women of his palace or among the girls of Egypt and Syria. The reflection of you showed crystal pure in the mirror and in its magic glass was reflected the indubitable proof of your chastity. Not the slightest cloudiness appeared, not the lightest vapour showed upon the glass. Zeyn looked and rejoiced at finding the miracle sealed with the unbroken seal of Sulayman (upon whom be prayer and peace!). He gave thanks to Allah who rewards the efforts of His Faithful!

As soon as Prince Zeyn knew that he had found the girl he needed, he sent Mubarak to enter into

negotiations for immediate marriage. Mubarak and Abu Bakr interviewed the child's father and, after formally obtaining his consent, led him to the prince's palace. Kadi and witnesses were sent for; a marriage contract was written out; and the wedding was celebrated with unusual pomp, with feasting and rich gifts to the poor of that quarter. As the other guests were departing, the prince kept Abu Bakr, and said to him: "Tonight we leave for a far country. Here are ten thousand golden dinars, a preliminary reward for your services. When I return to Bassora, I will be able to show my gratitude in some better way. Perhaps you would care to become my grand-chamberlain." After giving his hand to the imam to kiss, he commanded his folk to set out; the girl was placed in a camel litter; Mubarak went first; Zeyn brought up the rear, and the whole caravan started for the Three Isles.

Their destination was very far from Baghdad and the journey took long months to accomplish. Every day the prince felt himself drawn more and more by the charms of the little virgin who was his wife. He loved her with all his heart for her natural sweetness, and tasted true passion for the first time. He thought bitterly of the day when he should hand her over to the Old Man of the Three Isles, and would certainly have carried the girl to Bassora if he had not sworn to do otherwise.

At length they entered the forbidden country and came to the isle by the same miraculous stages as before. After greetings and compliments, Zeyn gave back the mirror and presented the veiled girl to the old man. The latter took the mirror but did not use it, for his eyes were mirrors as he looked upon the child. After a long glance he threw his arms round

Zeyn's neck, and kissed him with effusion, crying: "I am indeed satisfied with your diligence; this damsel is all that I required. Her beauty is the one perfection of beauty upon earth, her virginity is above reproach, she is sealed as with the seal of our master Sulayman (upon whom be prayer and peace!). Return now to your own place and, when you enter the green earthenware hall, you will find the seventh diamond girl standing among the six others, outdoing them a thousandfold with her brightness. Now tell this child that you are leaving her and that bonds are broken between you."

When Latifa heard this she sighed and wept, for she had grown to love the handsome prince. And Zeyn wept also, as he explained the contract which he had made with the Old Man of the Isles. "You are divorced," he said, and went sobbing from that place, while Latifa swooned despairingly.

Zeyn and Mubarak returned to Bassora and, throughout the journey, the younger man bitterly reproached himself for having deceived his bride. He would not be comforted, and stood desolate amid the great rejoicings which broke out in Bassora at his coming. He withdrew from the feasting and, in spite of Mubarak's insistence, even refused to go down into the green underground hall and look at the seventh diamond girl. Mubarak was now wazir; he went on beseeching his master until at last he consented to visit the statues. Zeyn crossed the porcelain and crystal hall, whose floor flamed yellow with the rest of the gold, and entered the gallery of green earthenware.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-thirty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE SAW THE SIX diamond girls standing in their places; but, on the seventh pedestal, there stood a naked smiling child, brighter than any diamond. For joy and stupefaction he could not speak, but Latifa said: "It is indeed I. Alas, alas, I fear that you were expecting something more precious." "As Allah lives," cried Zeyn, "I came down here with a broken heart. My father was right when he said that the seventh was worth a thousand of the rest."

As he spoke, there was a clap of thunder and the earth about them shook. The Old Man of the Isles appeared, with a pleasant smile upon his face. He took Zeyn's hand and placed it in Latifa's, saying: "Since your birth, my son, you have been under my protection. I had therefore to think out some way of assuring your perfect happiness. At last I found this means and this treasure; a little virgin girl is more than diamonds; unsullied beauty and youth is all the wealth and medicine of the soul." The old man kissed Zeyn and disappeared.

Latifa and her king loved each other with a great love through years of delicate and chosen life, until the Separator came. Glory be to the Sole Living who knows not death!

Shahrazade fell silent and King Shahryar exclaimed: "That was a strange and delightful tale, Shahrazade!" Shahrazade smiled as she replied: "O king, that mirror is not to be compared with the Wonderful Lamp." "What wonderful lamp is that?" asked

the king, and Shahrazade answered: "It is Aladdin's Lamp. I am just about to tell you of it." Then she said:

THE TALE OF ALADDIN AND THE WONDERFUL LAMP

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious king, that there was once—but Allah knows all—in the antiquity of time and the passage of the age and of the moment, a poor tailor in a certain city of China. I do not for the present remember the name of that city. This man had a son, called Aladdin, who was backward in booklearning and, from his earliest years, a most disappointing little rascal. When the child was ten, his father wished to have him taught some honourable trade; but, as he could not afford to pay for instruction, he had to be content with taking him into his own shop to learn the business of a tailor. The wayward lad, who was accustomed to wander about playing with his companions, could not constrain himself to stay in the shop for one whole day. Instead of attending to the work, he took every advantage of his father's absence or attention with a client, to slip out and play in the streets and gardens with young urchins of his own inclination. His conduct continued to be so idle and disobedient that his father soon ceased from checking him, and let him go his own disastrous way. The poor man was stricken down by illness in the midst of his grief, but even his death did not turn Aladdin from his dissolute courses.

Seeing that her husband was dead and her son good for nothing, Aladdin's mother sold the shop with all which it contained; and, when the little

money she gained from this sale had been expended, spun wool and cotton, day and night, to win food for herself and her child.

Now that he no longer had a father to fear, Aladdin gave himself up without restraint to his vagabonding tendency; he spent all his days away from home and only returned for meals. But, in spite of this, his mother fed him with her toil and wept as she worked. By the time Aladdin was fifteen he was as handsome and well-built as you could wish; he had two black magnificent eyes and a skin of jasmin.

One day, as he was playing with his friends in the square near the entrance to the market, a dervish, who was a Moor, stopped and gazed attentively at the children. Soon his look became fixed on Aladdin to the exclusion of the others, and he watched him with an unwinking fire in his eyes. This dervish, who came from the far interior of Morocco, was a powerful magician, deeply learned in astrology and the reading of faces. He could move high mountains against each other by his sorcery. As he looked long at Aladdin, he said to himself: "This is the lad I need; this is the lad for whom I have searched, for whom I left Morocco."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-thirty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WITHOUT LOSING SIGHT of Aladdin, he drew one of the other boys aside and asked him several questions

concerning Aladdin's father and mother, and what his name and position in life might be. Then, fortified by the answers which he had received, he went up to Aladdin with a smile, and led him into a corner, where he said: "My child, are you not Aladdin, the tailor's son?" "I am Aladdin," answered the boy, "but my father has been dead for a long time." At these words, the dervish took the boy in his arms, and kissed him long on both cheeks, weeping tumultuously the while. "Why do you weep, my lord?" asked the astonished Aladdin, "Did you, by chance, know my dead father?" "My child," answered the Moor in a sad and broken voice, "why should I, who am your uncle, not weep, when I suddenly hear of the death of my poor brother? Sweet nephew, I left my native land and confronted all the perils of a long journey, solely to see your father once again. And now, alas, you tell me he is dead." He paused for a moment, as if suffocated by his emotion, and then continued: "Dear brother's son, my blood called to yours when I saw you; it singled you out among all your little friends. When I parted from my brother, you were not yet born, he was not yet married; and yet I recognised you. That consoles me a little for his loss. Yet woe, woe to my head! Where are you now, dear brother, whom I longed to kiss? Alas, alas, who may boast that he has outstripped the feet of Destiny, or turned aside the prescription of our God!" He embraced Aladdin again, and thus went on: "I give praise to Allah, my son, that I have met you. You shall be my consolation, and take your father's place within my heart; he who leaves a son does not die."

The Moor took ten gold dinars from his belt and gave them to Aladdin, asking at the same time where

his mother lived. Delighted by the gift and smiles of the old man, Aladdin took him by the hand and, leading him to one side of the square, pointed out the street in which his mother's lodging stood. Then said the Moor: "Give those ten dinars to my brother's wife, with every cordial and respectful greeting. Tell her that your uncle has voyaged to this place after a long absence and that he hopes to visit her tomorrow morning. Say he is very anxious to greet her, to visit his brother's tomb, and to see those places in which the departed passed his life."

Aladdin kissed the old man's hand and ran joyfully to his mother's house, arriving there an hour before the meal for the first time in his life. "Mother," he cried, "my uncle has voyaged to this city after a long absence and sends you his greetings." "Are you making fun of me, my child?" asked his astonished mother, "What uncle is this? Since when have you had a living uncle?" "A living uncle?" retorted Aladdin, "The man is my father's brother. He took me to his breast, kissed me with many tears, and himself bade me announce his coming." Then said his mother: "My child, I know very well that you had an uncle, but he has been dead for many years; I do not know since when you have had another." The woman looked at her son strangely and, seeing him occupied with some other interest, forbore to speak further about his uncle that day. Aladdin, for his part, said nothing of the money which the Moor had given him.

Next morning Aladdin left the house early; and the Moor found him in the same place, and with the same companions, as on the day before. The old man approached the lad and, taking him by the hand, embraced him tenderly; then he gave him two dinars,

saying: "Hand these to your mother and say that your uncle will feed with you this evening. She will be able to buy excellent food with this money. . . . Now show me the way to your house once more." "Upon my head and eyes, dear uncle," answered Aladdin, and again he pointed out the road which led to his mother's house. The Moor then left him and he ran to his mother, holding out the two dinars, and crying: "My uncle is coming to eat with us this evening!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-thirty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN SHE SAW the two dinars, Aladdin's mother said to herself: "Perhaps I did not know all my husband's brothers." She hastened to the market where she bought the materials for an excellent supper, but when she would prepare them, she had to borrow cooking pots and the like from her neighbours, because she had sold all her own. She spent her day in the kitchen and, towards evening, said to Aladdin: "The meal is ready, but perhaps your uncle does not know the way to our house. Go out and wait for him in the street." As Aladdin was about to obey, there came a knock at the door; he ran to open and found the Moor standing outside with a porter, who carried a load of fruits, pastries, and refreshing drinks upon his head. Aladdin led them both inside and, after the porter had set down his load and been dismissed with payment, brought the dervish into his mother's

presence. The old man bowed, and said brokenly: "The peace of Allah be upon you, O wife of my brother!" Then, while the woman answered his greeting, he wept silently. "Where used the dead man to sit?" he asked, and, when the place was shown to him, cast himself upon the ground, kissing and sighing: "Alas, alas, I am very distressed for you, vein of my eye, my brother!" Then he wept and lamented, with a face so wrung and such a heaving of his entrails that he seemed like to faint, and quite persuaded Aladdin's mother that he was really the brother of her husband. She lifted him from the ground, saying: "My brother, you will kill yourself with weeping!" She went on sweetly consoling him until he was well enough to drink a little water and sit down to meat.

When they were all seated round the cloth, the Moor spoke as follows:

"Wife of my dear brother, you must not be surprised at thus seeing me for the first time, or blame me that I never made myself known to you when my brother was alive. Thirty years ago I left this country, and since then I have wandered through Ind and Sind, about Arabia and in Egypt, where I abode in the magnificent city of Masr, the miracle of the world. At last I set out for the further parts of Morocco, where I have lived for twenty years.

"But one day, as I sat in my house, I began to think of my native land and my brother. Desire came to me to see the flesh of my flesh, so that I wept for my life's exile. At length my longing grew so great that I determined to set out for the dear land which saw my head come forth when I was born. I said to myself: 'O man, many years have slipped away since you left your native city and the home of your only

brother. Before death comes to you, rise up and seek your kind; for none may reckon without the calamities of Fate, the accidents and revolutions of time. Would it not be great misery to die before you had set eyes on your dear brother, especially as he may be in poverty while Allah has blessed you with riches? It is possible for you to do two meritorious things at one time, to visit a brother and to succour him.'

"Therefore I rose and prepared for my journey. When I had made Friday's prayer and spoken the Fatiha of the Koran, I mounted my horse and left home. After great peril and fatigue by the way, Allah brought me to my city. I wandered about the streets and quarters, hunting for my brother's house, and Allah led me to a sight of this child, playing among his companions in the square. Hardly had I seen him, O wife of my dear brother, when I felt my heart blossom because of him; blood called to blood and I recognised my nephew. Then I forgot my weariness and well-nigh swooned for joy."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-thirty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"BUT ALAS, HIS first news told me that my brother had passed into the high mercy of Allah. Do you wonder that I nearly fell down for grief? But perhaps the boy has told you how he consoled me by his resemblance to the dead, and by bringing to my mind the proverb: *He does not die who leaves a son.*"

When the Moor had finished speaking, he saw Aladdin's mother weeping bitterly because of the memories of her husband which his recital had invoked; to change the dark current of her thoughts, he turned to Aladdin, and asked: "What trade have you learnt, my son? By what labour do you help your mother and gain a living for your little household?"

Aladdin hung his head in shame, and his mother answered for him: "Did you say trade, O brother of my husband? A trade for Aladdin? As Allah lives, he knows nothing at all; nor have I ever seen a more contrary child! All day he runs about with the little scamps and vagabonds of the quarter. My sorrow, his father died through disappointment in him, and now I myself am failing fast. My eyes are so worn by waking and weeping that I can hardly see to spin wool to buy us bread. O brother of my husband, I swear that he never comes home except for meals. Sometimes I am tempted to shut the door against him, that he may be obliged to work for his living; but my mother's heart has not the strength to do so. Age comes, and I am getting very old; my shoulders can hardly bear the burdens as they used to do. My fingers can scarcely turn the spindle now. I think that life will soon betray me, even as Aladdin has betrayed me."

The old woman wept, and the Moor said sternly to Aladdin: "I did not know these things, my nephew. Why do you walk as a wastrel in a staggering path? Are you not ashamed, Aladdin? Such conduct does not suit a fine young man like yourself, well-born and dowered with excellent brains. It dishonours you to let your poor mother work, when you are old enough to carve out a position for yourself and keep the two. Thanks to the goodness of Allah, there are a multitude

of men in our city who could teach you every trade under the sun. You have but to choose, and I will take it upon myself to pay the necessary fees. Then, when you are a man, you will have a trade to protect you from all the assaults of Destiny. If you do not wish to be a tailor, let me know what other occupation would suit you, and I will see that you are instructed in it."

Instead of answering, Aladdin continued to look at the floor in silence, as if to signify that he still preferred his idle life; so the Moor, understanding his repugnance to labour with his hands, tried to catch him in another way. "Do not let my insistence and suggestion offend you, or give you pain, dear nephew," said he, "If trades seem unpleasant to you and you yet wish to become an honest man and worthy citizen, I am ready to open a fine shop for you in the great market and install you there. I will stock the place with costly stuffs and silk brocades, so that you may soon be on terms of equality with the great merchants. You shall become accustomed to buying and selling, taking and giving, and your reputation in the city shall be such that it will do no hurt to the memory of your dead father. What do you say to that, Aladdin?"

When Aladdin understood that he had the chance of becoming a great merchant, dressed in fine clothes, with a silk turban and a beautiful belt of many colours, he rejoiced exceedingly and smiled at the Moor, leaning his head to one side, as if to say: "Most certainly I accept."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-thirty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

UNDERSTANDING THAT HIS proposal was accepted, the Moor went on: "Now that you are willing to become a person of importance, a dignified merchant with a shop of his own, try to show yourself worthy of these things. Be a man, my nephew! Tomorrow, if Allah wills, I will take you to the market and begin all by buying you a fair new robe, such as rich merchants wear, and the things which go with it. After that, we can look for an auspiciously situated shop."

Seeing this generosity and hearing these exhortations, Aladdin's mother blessed the goodness of God in sending her a relation, to save her from want and set Aladdin's feet in the way of right behaviour. She served the meal with a light heart, as if twenty years had dropped from her shoulders, and, while they ate and drank, the three chatted of Aladdin's future. The Moor began to initiate the boy into aspects of the life and behaviour of merchants, and easily succeeded in rousing his interest. Then, as he saw that half the night was spent, he took leave of Aladdin's mother and kissed Aladdin. Before he left, he promised to return on the morrow, so that Aladdin could not shut his joyful eyes all night for thinking of the delightful life which opened out before him.

Early next morning there was a knock at the door and, when the old woman went to open it, she found the Moor standing outside, faithful to his promise of the day before. He refused her invitation to enter

and, when Aladdin, who was already up and dressed, ran to wish his uncle good day and kiss his hands, he bade farewell to the woman and led the lad to the market. He entered the shop of the greatest merchant there, and asked for the costliest robe which the man had suitable to Aladdin's figure. The merchant showed them many delightful dresses and the Moor bade Aladdin choose which of them he would. Skipping for joy, the youth picked out a robe of striped and shining silk, a white turban decorated with gold, a Kashmir belt, and boots of bright red leather. The Moor paid for all without haggling, and then handed the package to Aladdin, saying: "Now we will go to the hammam, since before putting on new clothes a bath is both necessary and auspicious." He conducted Aladdin into the private hall of the hammam and, after washing him with his own hands, took a bath himself. Then he called for refreshments, and the two drank together and were content. At length Aladdin put on his robe of striped and shining silk, placed the fair turban upon his head, girt himself with the Indian belt, and put the red boots upon his feet. So dressed, he was more beautiful than the moon and held himself like a king's son. Glorifying in his transformation, he kissed his uncle's hand and thanked him for the gifts. "That is only a beginning," said the Moor, as he embraced him. They left the hammam together and visited the shops of the merchants in the principal markets. In these places the Moor pointed out rare stuffs and costly ornaments to Aladdin, teaching him the names of everything, in order to prepare him for the time when he should buy and sell. He took him to visit the remarkable buildings of the city, the chief mosques, and the great khans where

the caravans put up. Then, after an inspection of the sultan's palace and its garden, he led him to the khan where he lodged and presented him as his nephew to the other merchants with whom he was acquainted. He invited them all to a feast in the boy's honour and regaled them with the choicest meats, keeping Aladdin by him at the cloth until the evening.

At nightfall he led Aladdin back to his house, and the boy's mother, poor woman, rejoiced in her heart when she saw her son so magnificently habited. She blessed her brother-in-law a thousand times, saying: "O brother of my husband, even if I try all my life, I shall never be able to thank you enough for your kindness." "There is no merit in what I do, no merit at all," answered the Moor, "Aladdin is my son and I must try to be a father to him, in place of the dead. Have no more care for him, but lift up your heart and rejoice." Aladdin's mother held her arms on high, and cried: "I pray to Allah, by the honour of the old and the later saints, to guard you and lengthen your life for us, my brother, that you may be, as it were, a wing to shade this fatherless boy! And I pray that he, for his part, will be ever obedient to your commands and do nothing of which you disapprove." "Have no fear," replied the Moor, "Aladdin has become a man of sense; he is a good boy and of a good family. I am confident that he will be a worthy descendant of his father and bring great joy to your declining years. . . . As tomorrow will be Friday and all the markets will be shut, I shall not be able to open the shop as I promised; but I shall do so without fail on the day after. Tomorrow I will continue Aladdin's course of instruction by taking him to visit the gardens beyond

the city, where the rich merchants walk together. I wish him to become accustomed to the sight of wealth and breeding; for, until today, he has companioned only with children." The old man took leave of the woman, kissed Aladdin, and retired.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-thirty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ALADDIN LAY AWAKE all night pondering his good fortune, and rose with the first light to walk up and down the house in his new clothes, tripping, from time to time, in the unaccustomed skirts. When his impatience told him that the Moor was late, he went to the door and there saw him approaching. He ran forward, like a young stallion, and kissed the old man's hands. The Moor embraced him very kindly and led him away. They walked together, talking of many things, until they had passed the gates of the city and come to the notable houses and handsome garden-girt palaces which lie beyond. Aladdin had never seen these before and was more and more delighted as each fresh one appeared. They went past the buildings into the open country and drew nearer the goal the Moor had set himself. Before they had gone quite far enough, however, Aladdin began to get weary and said: "See, my uncle, we have passed all the gardens and have nothing before us except that mountain. I am tired and hungry; may we not rest a little?" The old man drew a

cloth filled with fruits and cakes from his girdle, and handed it to Aladdin, saying: "These will appease your hunger and thirst, my son; but we must walk a little further to reach the marvellous place I have in mind to show you. It has not its equal in the world. Be resolute for a little longer, Aladdin; for you are a man now." He continued to encourage him with advice for the future, until they came to the foot of the mountain, at the end of a deserted valley filled only with the presence of God.

This place was the Moor's goal; to reach that valley he had left Morocco and come to China.

"Here we are, my son," he said, with a smile, to the weary boy, as he sat down beside him on a rock and tenderly put his arm about his neck, "Rest a little; I am going to show you something which the eyes of man have never seen before. Here and now you shall behold a garden more beautiful than all the gardens of the earth. When you have seen it, you will thank me and forget your weariness. More, you will bless the day when first you met me." He allowed the boy to rest for a short while, round-eyed with astonishment to think that he should see a garden in that place of fallen rocks and withered shrubs; then he said: "Rise up now, Aladdin, and collect the driest twigs and fragments of wood which you can find among these shrubs. Bring them to me, and you shall see the sight for which I led you hither." Aladdin went among the bushes, and collected a heap of dried twigs and brushwood, which he carried to the old man. "That is excellent," said the Moor, "Now retire a few paces and keep behind me." When Aladdin had placed himself some distance behind his uncle's back, the Moor took a

tinder-box from his belt and set fire to the wood; as soon as it crackled and blazed, he opened a tortoiseshell box and threw a pinch of incense from it into the flame. A thick smoke immediately rose, which he waved from side to side with his hand, muttering spells in an unknown tongue. Soon the mountain trembled, the rocks were troubled, and the earth gaped, leaving a hole ten cubits across. At the bottom of this hole appeared a horizontal marble slab, five cubits square, in the middle of which there was a copper ring.

Aladdin gave a frightened cry when he saw these things, and, taking the skirts of his robe in his teeth, turned his back and fled precipitately. But the Moor was upon him in a single bound, his eyes blazing with anger. Taking the terrified boy by the ear with one hand, he gave him a heavy slap across the face with the other, so that Aladdin turned giddy and sank to the ground.

The Moor treated him thus harshly in order to have dominion over him once and for all, since, without his aid, he could never reach the object which he had in mind. He now lifted him kindly from the earth, and said very sweetly: "I only struck you in order to make a man of you, Aladdin. I am your uncle, your father's brother, and you must obey me. Now listen carefully and do not miss a word of what I say. You have seen the earth opened by my spells and fumigation, but I was only working for your advantage. Below that marble slab is a treasure written in your name and only to be opened in your presence. It will make you richer than all the kings of the earth. As a proof that it is yours, let me tell you that no one in the world except yourself could lift that slab. In spite of my great power,

nay, were my power a thousand times greater than it is, I could not touch that copper ring, or lift the marble. Nor might I descend a single stair of those which lie beneath. Only you can undertake the opening of this treasure. Do as I bid you, and we will divide the mighty riches equally between us."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-thirty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

POOR ALADDIN HAD quite forgotten his weariness and the buffet which he had received. "Tell me what to do and I will obey," he cried; so the Moor kissed him many times on the cheek, and continued: "You are dearer than a son to me, Aladdin. I have no other relation; you are my heir and my posterity. For your sake I undertook my far journey; if I was a little short with you, it was only to chide you for turning your back upon your marvellous destiny. . . . First come down with me into the hole, take hold of the ring, and lift up the slab." So saying, he jumped first into the hole and helped Aladdin down beside him. "I am only a boy," protested Aladdin, "how can I lift so heavy a slab? If you help me I may be able to do it, but not otherwise." "Ah, no, no," answered the Moor, "If I set hand to it you could do nothing, and your name would be for ever taken from that treasure. Try by yourself and you will find that you can lift the marble as easily as a feather. As you take hold of the ring, say over your name and

your father's name and your grandfather's name. That is all you have to do."

Aladdin took hold of the ring and tugged at it, saying: "I am Aladdin, son of Mustapha, the tailor, son of the tailor, Ali." The slab moved easily under his hand; he set it on one side and looked down into a cave, where twelve marble steps led to a double door of red copper studded with boltheads of the same. Then said the Moor: "Go down into the cave, my son, and enter by the copper door, which will open of itself at your coming. You will then find yourself in a monstrous cavern, divided into three communicating halls. In the first hall you will see four mighty bronze jars filled with liquid gold; in the second, four silver jars filled with gold dust; and in the third, four gold jars filled with coined gold pieces. Pass these things by and hold your robe close in about your waist, lest it touch any of the jars; for, if it do so, you will instantly be changed to a block of black stone. At the end of the third hall you will find another door, in all respects like this, which will lead you into a magnificent garden of heavy-fruited trees. Do not linger in that place either. Walk straight across and you will come to a columned staircase with thirty steps, climbing up to a terrace. Now pay even stricter attention. When you are on the terrace, you will see a niche facing you between columns and, in that niche, upon a pedestal of bronze, a little copper lamp. The lamp will be burning, but you must extinguish it and, after pouring its oil upon the ground, hide it quickly in your bosom. Do not fear for your robe; for that oil is not ordinary oil and will leave no trace. . . . Then you must return to me by the way you have gone; though you may pause in the garden and eat some of the fruits, if you

have a mind to them. When you come back to me with the lamp, we shall be rich and glorious for ever, my child."

The Moor then drew a ring from his finger and put it on Aladdin's thumb, saying: "This will guard you from all danger and preserve you from every evil. Be bold, fill full your breast with courage, for you are no longer a child. Nothing but good will come of this; we shall be rich and honoured for the rest of our lives when we have the lamp. . . . Only be very careful to lift your robe high and hold it close in against you; otherwise you and the treasure will be lost together."

Then he embraced Aladdin, giving him many little friendly taps upon the cheek. "Depart in safety, my dear child," he said.

Aladdin felt his heart puffed up with courage. He ran down the marble steps and, lifting his robe to his belt, went through the copper doors which swung aside to let him pass. Without forgetting a single one of his uncle's recommendations, he walked through the three halls, giving the jars a wide berth, hurried across the garden, climbed the thirty-columned stairs and, reaching the terrace, walked over to the niche which showed opposite to him.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-thirty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE SAW A LIGHTED LAMP standing on a bronze pedestal, took it in his hand, and emptied the oil

upon the terrace. Then, seeing that the outside was also dry, he hid it in the bosom of his robe and went down from the terrace into the garden.

He stood on the last step to look at the garden and gazed for the first time upon its trees. He saw that they bent beneath the weight of fruits unusual in form, size, and colour. Each branch of each tree bore fruits of different tints; some white and transparent like crystal, some with the troubled white of camphor, and some a blank white as of virgin wax. Some fruit was red like grains of pomegranate, and some blood-orange red; there were light green and dark green fruit; there were blue and violet and yellow, with an infinite variety of other colours. Aladdin did not know that the white fruits were diamonds, pearls, nacre, and moon-stones; that the red were rubies, carbuncles, hyacinths, corals, and carnelian; that the green were emeralds, beryls, jade, prase, and aquamarine; that the blue were sapphires, lapis, turquoise, and lazulite; that the violet were amethyst, jaspers, and sardonyx; that the yellow were topaz, amber, and agate; and that those of unknown colours were opal, aventurine, chrysolite, cymophane, hematite, tourmaline, peridot, jet, and chrysoprase. The sun scattered his rays through these jewels on to the garden, and the trees burnt as with magic fire.

Delighted with their aspect, Aladdin went up to one of the trees and plucked some of its fruit to eat; but he found them uneatable and only in form like the oranges, figs, bananas, grapes, melons, apples, and excellent fruits of China. When he found that they were not for his taste, he supposed them to be made of coloured glass, and, though bitterly disappointed, set about plucking some as presents for his mother

and young comrades. He selected many of each colour and went on stuffing them into his belt and pockets and inside his robe, until he looked like an ass loaded on both sides. Staggering a little under this burden, he carefully lifted his robe in at the waist and made his way safely through the three halls, without in any way touching their jars.

As soon as he had gone out by the copper door and stood upon the first step of the stair, the Moor said impatiently: "Where is the lamp?" "I have it here in my bosom," answered Aladdin. "Take it out and give it me!" cried the Moor; but the boy replied: "How can I give it you now, when it is all loaded away among the glass marbles with which I have stuffed my clothes? Let me come up, help me out of the hole, and I will set the marbles in a safe place, so that they cannot roll down the steps and break. After that I will be able to reach the lamp and give it you. I am very sure I want to be rid of the thing, for it has slipped round to my back and is bruising me." The Moor raged at this delay, thinking that Aladdin wished to keep the lamp for himself. So he cried out in a terrifying devil's voice: "Son of a dog, give me the lamp or die!" Aladdin, who did not understand this change of front and was terrified lest he should receive another slap, turned his back and prudently retreated into the cave, to wait for his uncle to become calmer.

The Moor stamped and tore his beard, for the cave was forbidden to him by magic, and he could not follow Aladdin. "You shall be punished as you deserve, vile boy!" he cried, as he ran to the still smouldering fire and threw incense upon it to an accompaniment of spells. The marble slab rose of itself and returned to its place; the earth trembled

and shut again over the cave, leaving Aladdin entombed beneath.

As has been told you, this Moor was a redoubtable magician from the interior of Morocco. He was no uncle, no relation at all, of Aladdin; but an African, born and bred in that hotbed of evil sorcerers.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-fortieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

FROM HIS EARLIEST youth he had avidly studied sorcery and spells, geomancy and alchemy, astrology, fumigation, and enchantment; so that, after thirty years of wizardry, he had learnt the existence of a magic lamp in some unknown place, powerful enough to raise its owner above the kings and powers of the world. Having penetrated the secret so far, he redoubled his labours and, by a last supreme experiment in geomancy, learnt that the lamp was to be found in a cavern near the city of Kolo-Ka-Tse in China. He had started immediately and arrived, after a laborious journey, at that far place which we have already visited. His first labour was to discover the exact site of the cave; when he had done so, he sat down at his divining table and learnt that the treasure and the lamp had been written, by the powers of earth, in the name of Aladdin, son of Mustapha. That is why he had sought out the boy and used his wiles to gain his friendship and lead him to the valley.

He had been eager to obtain the lamp at once, so that he might keep it for himself and imprison Aladdin for ever in the cave; but, as we have seen, Aladdin had retreated into the cave and been shut there without the lamp having changed hands.

As soon as he had left the boy to perish of hunger and thirst, the Moor departed; probably for Africa. It is certain that we will hear of him again.

When Aladdin re-entered the cave, he felt the earth tremble and feared that the roof would fall in upon his head. He ran to the entrance, but discovered that the marble slab had returned to its place and was immovable against his pressure. He became very frightened and began calling loudly to his uncle for help, promising to give him the lamp immediately. It was only when there was no answer to his cries that he began to doubt if the Moor was altogether as he had given himself out. Considering that no real uncle would call his nephew a son of a dog, he gave up all hope of escape from that side and made his way through the halls towards the garden; but the door into the garden was shut fast against him. He ran back to the mouth of the cave and cast himself weeping on the steps below the slab. He was buried alive with all that useless gold. He sobbed and sighed as he thought, for the first time in his life, of his mother's goodness and the ingratitude with which he had repaid it. Death seemed to him the more bitter since he could not first delight his mother by some change in his behaviour, which would show her that he understood her excellence. As he grieved, he began to twist his arms and rub his hands together in despair, crying: "There is no power or might save in Allah!" The working together of his hands caused him to rub the ring

which the Moor had given him as a protection. The terrible old man did not know that this ring would save the boy's life, or he would have torn it from him by force or wiled it away from him. All magicians are like this Moor: in spite of their evil power, they have not the prevision of ordinary men in simple matters. In their pride and self-confidence, they never appeal to the Master of all men; their minds are obscured by a smoke thicker than their fumigations, their eyes are veiled as with a kerchief; they totter among shadows.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-forty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AS SOON AS Aladdin had unwittingly rubbed the ring upon his finger, he saw a great black Ifrit rise from the earth before him, with red flaming eyes, who said in a voice of thunder: "*I am master of earth and air and wave; but slave of the ring and the wearer's slave. What will you have, master, what will you have?*" Aladdin was terrified and would certainly have fallen into a swoon in any other place or circumstance; but, as he sat with death and hunger in the cave, this terrible apparition seemed a door of safety. He lifted up his heart, and answered: "Master of earth and air and wave, please let me out of this cave."

Hardly had he spoken when the earth opened above his head and he found himself standing in the

open air, near the spot where the Moor had lighted his fire. The Ifrit had disappeared.

Trembling with joyful relief, Aladdin gave thanks to God for his deliverance from the Moor. When he looked about him and saw the city in the midst of its gardens in the distance, he hastened towards it, without once looking back. He reached home worn out and breathless, at midnight, to find his mother weeping with anxiety for his late return. She opened to him and took him in her arms as he fainted across the threshold.

When he came to himself, his mother gave him a little rose-water to drink, and asked what had happened. "Mother, I am so hungry," answered Aladdin, "Give me something to eat." His mother brought him all the food which there was in the house and he began to eat it so eagerly that she cried: "Do not hurry, my son, do not hurry. You will crack your throat! I can wait for the story until you have finished. Eat more slowly, eat more slowly. Though Allah knows I was anxious enough. But take smaller mouthfuls, my child, take smaller mouthfuls!" As soon as he had made the platter clean, Aladdin took the waterjar and emptied all its contents down his throat. Then, with a sigh of contentment, he said: "Now I can tell you my adventures with the wicked old man who said he was my uncle. He made me see death within two inches of my eyes! For all his tenderness he was no uncle of mine; he was a Moor, a sorcerer, a liar, a cheat, a twister, a dog, a devil of all devils. Listen, mother, to what he did. . . . O mother I am glad to be rid of him!" Then he took several long breaths and told his mother the whole story. But there is nothing to be gained by repeating it in this place. When he had finished,

he undid his belt and let the marvellous provision of transparent fruit fall upon the mattress, and the lamp tumbled out also.

"To think that I risked my life for these silly things!" he said and then, as he turned over the glinting jewels: "I am not a child, to play with coloured marbles!"

His mother, while listening to the tale of his misfortunes, had kept up a running fire of such curses upon the Moor as a mother's anger may find in its extremity. Thus she was already calm and able to take her son to her bosom, saying: "Let us thank Allah that he has withdrawn you safe and sound from the hands of that wizard! He would have killed my child for a copper lamp not worth half a dirham! I was a fool; I might have known from his bleared eyes that he was an Unbeliever and no kin of your poor father." She went on soothing Aladdin until he fell into a sound sleep with his head upon her knees; then she carefully lowered him on to the mattress and lay down to sleep beside him.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-forty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN THEY WOKE next morning, they kissed again with great love and Aladdin assured his mother that he now saw the errors of his youth. "I will work for you like a man," he said, "I will go and seek employment this very day. But first I must have

something to eat." "Alas, my son," answered his mother, "I gave you all the food we had in the house last night. Wait for a little and I will sell some of my spinning for bread and meat." "Leave your spinning for the time, dear mother," said Aladdin, "If you take that old lamp to the market you will surely get enough for it to feed us during the day." "You are right, my son," agreed his mother, "Also tomorrow I will take out the glass marbles and sell them in the negro's quarter, for black men will give the best price for them."

Aladdin's mother took the lamp and was just about to leave the house with it, when she noticed that it was very dirty. "If I polish it," she said, "I will get a better price." She went to the kitchen and, mixing a little ash in water, began to clean the lamp. But the moment she rubbed the surface, an Ifrit of terrifying appearance surged out of the thin air towards her, his vast black head scraping against the ceiling. He bowed before her and said in a voice deafeningly loud: "*I am master of earth and air and wave, but slave of the lamp, and the bearer's slave. What will you have, mistress, what will you have?*"

Aladdin's mother, who was not used to such appearances, stood rooted to the floor with knotted tongue and open mouth. Then, from sheer terror, she fell forward in a swoon.

Aladdin had been standing near his mother in the kitchen; now, seeing that the apparition was not so monstrously ugly as the one he had seen in the cave, he took the lamp from the old woman's limp hand and held it firmly, saying: "O slave of the lamp, I am hungry. I bid you bring me an excellent repast." The Jinni vanished and re-appeared in a moment,

bearing on his head a great tray of massive silver which held twelve gold dishes of scented and hot-tasting meats, six warm loaves as white as snow but gilded about their sides, and two large flasks of old clear excellent wine. In his hands he carried a stool of ebony inlaid with mother-of-pearl and silver, and two silver cups. He arranged the contents of the tray upon the stool, and discreetly disappeared.

Seeing that his mother still lay in her swoon, Aladdin sprinkled rose-water over her face. This, combined with the fine smells steaming up from the dishes, soon brought the poor woman to herself. When he had helped her to her feet, Aladdin said: "You need not be frightened, mother. Come and eat, for Allah has sent us that which is well worth eating. For pity's sake, do not let everything get cold!"

When she saw this wonderful meal spread out before her, Aladdin's mother forgot the cause of her fainting, and cried: "May Allah prolong the life of our noble sultan! Surely he has heard of our poverty and sent one of his cooks to us with this tray!" "Dear mother," answered Aladdin, "this is no time for supposition or question. Start eating before everything gets cold!"

They fell to with great delight and were so tickled by the marvellous quality of the meats and wines that they joined the evening meal to the morning meal, without once rising from the cloth. When at last they could take no more, the old woman set aside the rest of the food for the morrow and locked the costly dishes in the kitchen cupboard. Then she returned to Aladdin, who told her how the slave of the lamp had provided the repast.

This news threw the woman into a violent agitation,

and she cried: "My child, I conjure you, by the milk which gave you suck, to throw away that lamp and take off that ring, for they are the gifts of devils. I would die if I saw such an Ifrit again! I feel the food rising up in my throat to stifle me! The Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!) commanded us to have no dealings with the powers of earth and air." "I would obey you in anything," answered Aladdin, "but I cannot throw away the lamp or the ring. The ring saved my life in the cave and the lamp must be equally precious, since it could bring us our food and also entice that evil Moor to journey from his far country. But I will hide the lamp, if you like, so that you need never set eyes on it." "Do as seems good to you, my son," answered his mother, "I for one will have nothing more to do with the slave of the ring or the slave of the lamp. Never mention them in my hearing, in case the speaking of their name should cause them to appear."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-forty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THOUGH THE TWO had finished the rest of the food early on the following day, Aladdin did not wish to have recourse to the lamp again so soon, for fear of frightening his mother. Instead he took one of the gold plates and, hiding it under his robe, carried it forth to a certain Jew who was craftier than the devil. The Jew examined the plate, scratched it a little with his finger nail, and said in a voice entirely devoid of

interest: "How much do you want for it?" "You know its value better than I do," answered Aladdin, who had no knowledge at all of precious metals, "I am willing to rely on the good faith of your estimate." At once the Jew, who was satisfied that the dish was of pure gold, took a single dinar from a drawer in the wall and gave this coin, which represented, perhaps, a thousandth part of the dish's value, to Aladdin. "Take it, my son, take it," he said, "By Moses and Aaron, I would never have given such a great sum to another; but I hope to persuade you to deal with me in the future." Aladdin clutched the dinar and ran off in the highest feather, so that the Jew bitterly regretted that he had not given less. Had there been a chance of his overtaking the boy's young feet, he would certainly have gone after him and tried to drive a better bargain.

Aladdin got change by buying bread from a baker, and ran to give the bread and money to his mother. "Go and buy us food, dear mother," he cried, "for I am not clever enough." His mother bought food, and on that day they ate and were content.

After that, it became Aladdin's custom, when the money ran out, to go to the market and sell another gold plate to the Jew. The poor old man was obliged to give him a dinar each time, as he had so rashly paid that price on the first occasion, and feared that the boy would go elsewhere. When the twelve dishes were gone, Aladdin wished to sell the large silver tray and, as it was too heavy to carry, brought the old merchant to see it. "I can give you two dinars for that," said the Jew, and the boy was so delighted that he threw in the two silver cups as a make-weight.

Thus Aladdin and his mother were able to live for several days longer. The boy, who had quite re-

nounced his old companions, spent all his time in the markets, talking seriously to merchants and persons of distinction, and learning many very useful things from their conversation.

When the two dinars were exhausted, Aladdin warned his mother so that she might leave the house, and then rubbed the lamp again upon that part of it which still shone from the old woman's application of water and ashes. The Jinni appeared and said, quite gently because the lamp had been rubbed gently: "*I am master of earth and air and wave, but slave of the lamp and the bearer's slave. What will you have, master, what will you have?*" "Slave of the lamp, I am hungry," said Aladdin, "I wish exactly the same meal as you brought the first time." The Jinni disappeared and returned in the twinkling of an eye with all things as before.

Soon the old woman returned to the house and was again astonished by the tempting sight and savour of the dishes. In spite of her wholesome fear of wizardry, she sat down with her son and ate until she had had enough. Even after that, the two continued at the cloth, being pricked on by the quality of the food, until they had lengthened out the morning meal into the evening meal, and night had fallen.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-forty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AS SOON AS the remnants of this repast were finished, Aladdin took one of the gold dishes to the market,

meaning to sell it to the Jew; but, while he was passing the shop of a venerable Mussulman goldsmith, renowned throughout the city for his fair dealing, the sheikh called him by name and invited him to enter. "My son," said the old man, when the boy was seated, "I have often observed you pass in the market, hiding something under your robe. Then following you with my eyes, I have seen you enter the shop of my neighbour the Jew, and come out from it without your hidden burden. Now I feel that I ought to tell you a thing which your few years could not have told you; that Jews are the sworn enemies of the Faithful and consider it lawful to rob them on every occasion; also that this Jew is the most dishonest and detestable of all, filled beyond his kind with hatred of those who believe in Allah. If you have something to sell, show it to me first and I swear, by the truth of our God, that I will assess its value justly, so that you may know what you are about when you sell it. Show me what is under your robe, and Allah curse all Jews!"

Aladdin did not hesitate to show his gold dish to the jeweller, and the sheikh, after casting an eye over it, asked: "How many of these have you sold to the Jew, and what did he give you for each?" "I have sold him twelve at a dinar each," answered Aladdin. The venerable goldsmith flew into a righteous rage, and cried: "Ah, the cursed Jew, son of a dog, grandson of Sheitan!" Then he weighed the dish in his scales, and went on more calmly: "This dish is made of the finest gold and is worth two hundred dinars. One way and another, the Jew has robbed you of more in a day than his tribe could take from us in a week; for we are on our guard against them now. Unfortunately we cannot have the Jew impaled,

for lack of witnesses; but in the future you will know how you stand. . . . If you wish it, I will give you two hundred dinars at once for your dish; but if you would rather have it valued by any other merchant, I will pay something over his highest offer." As he had no reason to doubt the goldsmith's probity, Aladdin took the two hundred dinars. And, later, he sold the other eleven dishes at the same honest price.

Though Aladdin and his mother became rich in this way, they did not abuse the blessings of Allah, but continued to live modestly, giving their surplus to the poor and needy. Also Aladdin continued his instruction in refinement, by assiduously frequenting the great merchants and men of high quality who met in the markets. Soon he had learnt good manners and was able to mix on terms of equality with goldsmiths and jewellers. At their shops he soon perceived that the fruits which he had brought back from the garden and had supposed to be coloured glass marbles, were in reality gems beyond the price and imagination of kings. As he was now much wiser than before, he spoke of this discovery to no one, not even to his mother; but collected the jewel fruit from the cushions and corners of the couch, and hid them in a locked box which he bought especially. The wisdom of this conduct was soon to be proved in most glorious fashion.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-forty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ONE DAY WHEN he was talking with certain merchant friends outside a shop, two of the sultan's heralds passed, clearing their way with long sticks, and crying: "Merchants and citizens, let it be known that our great-hearted master, the king of time, the lord of minutes and of centuries, bids you shut your shops and hide immediately behind the closed doors of your houses. The pearl of all pearls, the gentle, the marvellous Badrulbudur, youngest of the moons of God, daughter of our sultan's glory, will pass through the streets to bathe at the hammam. May her bath be delicious! If any dare to disregard this order and peep through doors or windows, he shall have his choice of the sword, the stake, and the scaffold. This notice is hereby given to all who wish to keep the blood within their necks!"

On hearing this proclamation Aladdin was seized with an irresistible desire to see the Princess Badrulbudur, for the greatness of her beauty was common talk among the people. So, instead of returning home as all the rest of the citizens had made haste to do, he ran to the hammam and hid himself behind the great door, in such a position that he might look through the crack of it and see the sultan's daughter passing to the bath.

He had only been in place for a few minutes when a crowd of eunuchs appeared, making way for the princess's train. Aladdin saw her among her women, a little moon outshining a host of stars; but, when she came to the threshold, she unveiled her face

and he was dazzled with unimagined sunlight. She was fifteen, neither more nor less; when you had seen her, you found the letter *alif* crooked in your reading, the young branch of the ban a clumsy thing, a crescent moon of no account after her brow. The lids hiding her black eyes were two rose leaves, her nose was as faultless as a king's sword, her neck was as soft as a dove's, her small chin smiled; surely she had been washed to that whiteness in the fountain Salsabil. A poet said of her:

*You have decked your hair with a wing torn from
night
To make the brow white,
You have enchanted your eyes with black kohl
To trouble the soul,
And have made spells on your cheek with a burnt rose
To shatter repose.*

The blood sang twice as quickly through Aladdin's head; he learnt beauty for the first time, and knew suddenly that all women were not old and ugly like his mother. This fair discovery struck him to stone behind the door, and it was many minutes after the princess had passed into the hammam before he had strength to slip from his hiding place and totter to his house, suffering the great change of love. "Who could have thought such beauty?" he murmured to himself, "Glory be to Him who made and painted her with perfection!" His head was buzzing with such considerations when he entered his mother's presence, and fell motionless before her upon the diwan.

His mother anxiously questioned his appearance, but he would not answer; she brought him meats, but

he would not eat. "What is the matter, my child?" she asked, "Are you ill? Have you any pain?" "Let me alone," he answered after a long silence. Then, as she insisted, he ate a little of the food in silence, keeping his eyes upon the cloth; and greatly to his mother's anxiety, he remained in that state of dream and pale languor until the morning.

When day dawned, his mother questioned him again with tears in her eyes, saying: "In the name of Allah which is upon you, my son, tell me what is the matter and do not torture me any longer by your silence. If you have taken any ill, I will go for the doctor. . . . There is a very famous Arab physician in our city now; the sultan sent for him especially. The miracles of his learning are upon every tongue. Shall I not fetch him for you?"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-forty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ALADDIN LIFTED HIS head and answered sadly: "I am not ill; I am quite well; only I thought that all women were like you. Yesterday I found out that this is not so." "What are you talking about, Aladdin?" asked his mother; and he continued: "I know what I am talking about. I have seen Princess Badruldur going into the hammam. I have learnt the meaning of beauty; and now I am good for nothing. I shall know no rest, my wits will not return to me, until I have won her in marriage from the king, her father."

Aladdin's mother thought that he had gone mad, and cried: "The name of Allah be about you, my child! Think of your lowly station, and calm yourself!" "I am not mad and I shall not calm myself," answered Aladdin, "Nothing will make me give up the fair Badruldur. The more you talk, the more determined I shall be to ask her from her father." "Do not say such things!" cried the old woman. "If the neighbours hear you and report your words to the sultan, you are lost. Even if you have taken this fatal resolution, who will you get to carry your petition?" "To whom could I give such a delicate commission except you, dear mother?" he replied, "I have every confidence in you and feel sure that you will carry the business to a successful conclusion." "I will do nothing of the kind!" she exclaimed, "I am not mad; I have not forgotten that you are the son of one of the poorest tailors in this city and that I myself, your mother, come of a scarcely better line. This princess will be given only to some son of powerful kings." Aladdin reflected for a moment and then answered: "I have considered these difficulties for many hours, but they have not changed my determination. If you really love me as a son, I beg you to do as I ask. If you will not, my death shall follow as a matter of course and you will lose me. For the last time, dearest mother, remember that I am your son."

The old woman burst into tears, and sobbed: "I am your mother, sweet son, you are the very stone of my heart's fruit. I have wished for nothing in the world but to see you married before my death. If you wish to marry, I will go at once and find some woman who is your equal. . . . But even then, I will not know what to answer when they ask me of your trade and profit, of your inheritance and prop-

erty. . . . So how, if I am certain of rebuff among lowly folks, could I ask the king of China for his only daughter? Reflect for a moment and you will see that the thing is impossible. I know that our sultan is great-hearted and never sends one of his subjects away empty-handed or without justice done; I know that he generously rewards the least merit which is brought to his notice; but what have you done to merit the smallest of his favours? What gift have you, however humble, to lay at his feet with your petition?" "You have touched the marrow of the matter!" exclaimed Aladdin, "If a rich gift can get me what I wish, I can carry off the prize from any man on earth. Those coloured fruits which I brought you from the hidden garden, esteeming them to be valueless glass marbles, are precious stones of such rarity that no king on earth has ever seen the like. If you wish to judge the matter for yourself, with the eyes of your experience, bring me a large china dish from the kitchen and I will show you."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-forty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IN A BUSTLE of astonishment Aladdin's mother ran to the kitchen and brought a large clean white dish to her son. Aladdin had already taken the magic fruits from their hiding place; now he ranged them with infinite skill upon the dish, grouping and contrasting them in form, size, and colour, until the old woman's

eyes were dazzled, and she cried out: "O beautiful, beautiful!" Then she shut her eyes against these brilliant fires. "I admit that your present will be accepted," she said, "The difficulty is not in that. It is in myself, your messenger. I could never sustain the presence of the king's majesty; I should either stand before him tongue-tied or else swoon to the ground in my confusion. Even supposing that I were so insane as to carry your message, how could I couch your request? What would happen? Either they would think me mad and I should be thrust from the presence; or else the king would be thrown into a violent rage and punish the two of us most terribly. Again, if neither of these things happened and the sultan was pleased to accept your present, he would ask me who you are, who was your father, what you do, how much you make, and the like; and I would have to say that you have no trade and that your father was the poorest tailor in all the city." "Do not worry about that," answered Aladdin, "The sultan will never ask you such questions, when he sees my gems of marvel spread out, like fruit, upon a dish. Do not exercise your mind over difficulties which will never come, but go about my business with an assured heart; for you must remember that I have a lamp which is more than all the trade and profit in the world."

He went on speaking to his mother with such warm assurance that she was at length convinced, and made ready for her interview by putting on the most beautiful garments which she possessed. When she had tied the dish of gems into a shawl, she left the house and made her way to the palace. She pressed into the audience hall behind a crowd of suitors and took her place among the front rank, in an attitude which be-

tokened humility even amid the humble bearing of that silent crowd. When the king entered, followed by his wazirs, emirs, and guards, the chief scribe stood before the throne and called to the petitioners one by one. Each cause was judged upon its merits, there and then, so that some went away exulting, and others cast down; but the greater part were not called for lack of time. Among these last was Aladdin's mother, because she had not the courage to speak or thrust herself forward.

When the sitting was over and the king had retired, there was nothing left for the poor old woman except to take her way sadly back to her own house, where Aladdin waited impatiently at the door. As soon as he saw his mother returning with the dish, he feared the worst and, dragging her into the house, stood before her, looking very yellow in the face, and questioned her with his eyes. The woman told him all that had passed. "You must excuse your mother this time, my son," she said, "I am not used to palaces, and the sight of the king so troubled me that I could neither speak nor thrust myself forward. But to-morrow, if Allah wills, I shall be braver." Though he was grieved at the delay, Aladdin rejoiced that the worst had not happened, and consoled himself with hope throughout the night. Next morning his mother went again to the palace, carrying the dish in a shawl and telling herself, as she walked, that she had quite conquered her timidity.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-forty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SHE ENTERED THE DIWAN and placed herself in the front rank before the throne, but again her terror held her down and she could do nothing to draw attention to herself. The sitting ended and she returned sorrowfully to tell Aladdin of her unsucccess and promise that things would go better on the morrow. Aladdin was obliged to lay in a new stock of patience. He lectured his mother on her lack of resolution but his words had little effect, for the poor woman went to the diwan on the six following days, always taking the dish with her, and always too bashful to press her suit. She would certainly have gone on in this way for a hundred days, until Aladdin was dead of despair, had not the king himself noticed her at length and been filled with curiosity about her. At the diwan's end on the tenth day, he turned to his grand-wazir, saying: "That old woman, who holds something done up in a shawl, has been here regularly for many days and yet has asked for nothing. What does she want?" Though the grand-wazir knew nothing of Aladdin's mother, he would not be at a loss for an answer, and therefore replied: "She is one of the many old women who come to the diwan upon some foolishness; probably someone has sold her some rotten barley, or a neighbour has used bad language, or her husband has beaten her." But the king would not be put off in this way. "I wish to question her," he said, "Bring her before me." The wazir placed his hand to his brow in sign of assent and led the old woman trembling to the foot of the throne, where she fell rather

than prostrated herself, and kissed the earth as she had seen the other suitors do. She stayed thus abased until the wazir touched her on the shoulder and helped her to rise. Then said the king: "I have seen you come to the diwan for many days and stand here asking nothing. Tell me what you desire and I will have justice done." Encouraged by this kindness, Aladdin's mother answered: "May Allah pour His blessings upon the head of our master the sultan! Before making her plea, O king of time, your slave begs for the promise of security, in case her words seem strange or offensive to the royal ears." The great-hearted sultan promised security and ordered the hall to be cleared so that the woman might speak freely. When none but the grand-wazir remained, he said kindly: "You may speak, for the hand of Allah is upon you, O woman." Then Aladdin's mother, who had quite recovered her fortitude, spoke up, saying: "I ask pardon beforehand for the strange audacity of my request." This roused the sultan's curiosity, and he hastened to reply: "Speak quickly and with a quiet mind, my woman; for I pardon all that you say and ask."

Aladdin's mother again prostrated herself before the throne and again called down the blessings and favours of Allah upon the king. Then, without reservation, she told all that had happened to Aladdin since the criers had gone about the streets, bidding the citizens keep their houses while the Princess Badruldur went processioning to her bath. When she had painted a picture of Aladdin's love despair, she fell into a confused silence for a moment, and then said in a low voice: "It only remains for me to entreat you, O king of time, not to blame me for my son's madness, or

punish me because my mother's heart could refuse him nothing."

The king had listened carefully but, when the old woman had made an end, he laughed benevolently, instead of flying into a temper, and said: "Now tell me what you have hidden in that shawl."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-forty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ALADDIN'S MOTHER UNDOED the shawl and silently presented the plate of jewel fruit to the king; the whole diwan was lighted up as if by coloured torches, and the sultan fell back on his throne, hiding his eyes. Then he took the dish in his hands and fingered the marvellous stones one by one for a long time. At last he turned to his wazir, crying: "By the life of my head, here is beauty indeed; these fruits are the most delightful of all time! Have you ever seen, nay, have you ever heard that anyone dreamed of, the like?" "I do not think that anyone has dreamed of the like, O king of time," answered the wazir, "These stones are, each of their kind, without a parallel; a single one of the smallest is worth all my master's treasure." "Then do you not think that this young Aladdin, who sends them to me, is worthier of my daughter's hand," asked the king, "than any king's son in the world?"

The wazir changed colour at this question, which he neither expected nor desired, for he had an ardent

son to whom the king had promised Badrulbudur. After a perplexed silence, he answered sadly: "You are right, O king of time; but perhaps your highness forgets that the princess is promised to my son. I ask you, as a favour, to allow me a delay of three months in which to find a fairer and more costly dowry for my son than this young stranger's gift."

The king, who was an expert in gems, knew that no one might find him a present equal to the marvels which he had just received; but, as he did not wish to grieve his wazir unduly, he answered kindly enough: "I grant you that delay; but, if you cannot find a dowry equal to or excelling these bright fruits which Aladdin sends me, I can do no more for your son, even in memory of your good and loyal service."

Then he spoke affably to Aladdin's mother: "You may return joyfully and in peace to your son and tell him that his request is granted. Tell him that my daughter is already betrothed to him, but that the marriage cannot take place for three months, as fitting garments and furnishing could not be procured in a less time."

Aladdin's mother lifted her arms to heaven, praying for the king's long life, and then flew on the wings of joy back to her house. Aladdin saw her face lighted with happiness, and asked: "O mother, am I to live or die?" The old woman sat down wearily on a couch and lifted her veil, as she answered: "I have good news for my Aladdin. The king's daughter is betrothed to you already. Your gift has been well received, but your marriage cannot take place for three months. That delay, I am sure, was granted at the secret solicitation of the grand-wazir, a most calamitous old man, who doubtless has his reasons. But I trust in Allah that nothing but good will come, and

that your wild dreams will be made true, my dearest son. . . . Allah confound that wazir and even him with the lowest of the people, for my heart misgives me concerning his whisperings in the king's ear. If it had not been for him, I am sure our good king, who was so transported by the jewels you sent him, would have allowed the marriage to take place today, or tomorrow at the latest."

Without pausing for breath, she gave Aladdin a full account of what had happened at the diwan, and cried when she had finished: "May Allah guard the life of our glorious king and preserve my son for the joys which wait upon his destiny!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-fiftieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ALADDIN LUXURIATED in his contentment and cried out: "Glory be to Allah, who has covered our house with His blessing and given a princess of most royal blood into our line!" He kissed his mother's hand with many thanks for her kindness, but the old woman took him to her heart and embraced him tenderly, pouring forth wishes for his prosperity and with them mingling tears that her husband, the tailor, could not be there to view the proud destiny of their wilful son.

From that time they impatiently counted the hours which separated them from the joyful ending of the three months' delay, and occupied themselves in feasting and giving alms to the poor, so that the Rewarder

of all men might see that they were worthy of His generosity.

Two months had passed in this way when Aladdin's mother, who went out every morning to the market to buy necessities for the marriage, noticed, as she walked along laden with a thousand packages both great and small, that the shops were decorated and hung with leaves, lanterns, and coloured flags which stretched across the way; that the streets were packed with palace dignitaries, clad in ceremonious brocades and riding upon noble horses; and that the shop-keepers and people, rich and poor alike, were bustling about with cries and demonstrations of unusual joy. She asked the oil merchant with whom she dealt what festival this might be, which caused such commotion of joy among the people; and the man answered in a shocked voice: "Surely you are jesting! Anyone would think that you were a stranger in our city, not to know that this is the bridal day of Princess Badrulbudur and the grand-wazir's son. She will soon be coming out of the hammam; these splendid gold riders are the guards of her escort."

Aladdin's mother waited to hear no more; forgetting the rest of her purchases, she fled through the markets, and arrived at her own house breathless with sorrow and indignation. She sank upon the couch and, when Aladdin ran to her, gasped out: "Destiny has turned an evil page for you, my son! All is lost; your promised happiness has withered away!" "What terrible thing has happened?" cried Aladdin in a fright, and she continued: "Alas, alas, the sultan has forgotten his oath. Today he marries Badrulbudur to the son of that pitch-faced old man, the grand-wazir, whom I so much suspected. All the city

is decorated for this evening." Fever leaped into Aladdin's brain and he stood shaking for a moment, as if he would have fallen dead; then he remembered the wonderful lamp and gained control of himself. He turned to his mother and said calmly: "I do not think the wazir's son will taste those sweets to-night. . . . Do not trouble any more about the matter; rise up and prepare food. . . . With Allah's help I shall see what is to be done."

Aladdin's mother prepared a meal which her son ate heartily. Afterwards Aladdin shut himself in his own room, begging her not to disturb him, and, after locking the door, took the magic lamp from its hiding place. As soon as he rubbed it in the required spot, the Ifrit of the lamp appeared before him, crying: "*I am master of earth and air and wave, but slave of the lamp, and the bearer's slave. What will you have, master, what will you have?*" "Listen carefully, O slave of the lamp," answered Aladdin, "for now it is no question of bringing me meat and drink, but a matter of much greater importance. The sultan received a present of jewel fruit from me, and promised me the hand of his marvellous daughter, Badruldur, in marriage. He insisted on a delay of three months and, during that time, has forgotten his oath. He is marrying the girl to his wazir's son, without even returning me my present. This I cannot allow; and I have called upon you to help me to prevent it." "Speak, O Aladdin, my master," said the Ifrit, "There is no need for you to give me these long explanations; command and I shall obey." "Very well, then," answered Aladdin, "This evening, when the newly married couple are put to bed, and before they have had time even to touch each other, you must carry the bed here to me. I will look after the rest."

"I hear and I obey!" replied the Ifrit, as he carried his hand to his forehead and disappeared.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-fifty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ALADDIN WENT OUT to his mother and sat talking with her as calmly as if nothing had ever threatened his marriage. When evening came and the old woman went to bed, he returned to his chamber and locked himself in to await the coming of the Ifrit. So much for him.

When the feasts and ceremonies, the receptions and rejoicings had finished in the palace, the bridegroom was led into the marriage-chamber by the chief eunuch, who speedily retired, shutting the door behind him. The young man undressed and, lifting the curtains, lay down in bed to await his bride. Soon she was led in by her mother and the women of her train, who undressed her, clad her in a simple silk chemise, and took down her hair. Then they placed her in bed as if by force, while she tried, or seemed to try, to fight against them and escape. As soon as she was couched beside the wazir's son, the women retired with many wishes for a worthy consummation, and the mother went last, shutting the door with that heavy sigh which is customary upon such occasions.

As soon as the two were alone together, even before they could have given each other the least caress, they felt their bed lifted into the air; in the twinkling of an

eye they were haled out of the palace and set down in a place which they did not know. But we know that it was Aladdin's chamber. As they lay motionless for fright, the slave of the lamp prostrated himself before Aladdin, saying: "I have done your bidding, my master. Tell me what more you require." "Take this young pimp and shut him in the privy for the night," said Aladdin, "Tomorrow morning return for orders." The slave of the lamp roughly lifted the wazir's son from the bed and, carrying him to the privy, thrust his head into the hole of it; then he breathed upon him a cold and stinking breath which stiffened him like wood in that position.

When Aladdin found himself alone with the princess Badrulbudur, he did not dream for a moment of abusing her situation, though he loved her with a great love. Instead, he bowed before her with his hand upon his heart, and said passionately: "O princess, you are safer here than in your father's palace. I have only carried you to this unknown place in order that you need not submit to the vile caresses of the wazir's idiot son. Though you were promised to me in marriage, I shall not even touch you until you have become my lawful wife."

The princess, who knew nothing of her father's promise to Aladdin, wept and did not answer; so the boy, to calm her and prove that his intentions were not evil, laid himself fully dressed by her side upon the bed and placed a naked sword between them. Then he turned his back and slept as calmly as if he were alone in his bachelor's bed, with Badrulbudur, for whom he longed, a thousand miles away.

Her trouble and fright prevented the princess from shutting an eye all night; she lay a prey to tumultuous thoughts until the morning. Though it must be ad-

mitted that she had less to complain of than her husband, with his head in the hole of the privy and his body petrified by the Ifrit's breath, it is equally true that neither could look upon their wedding night as altogether satisfactory.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-fifty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

NEXT MORNING, the slave of the lamp presented himself before Aladdin without being summoned. As the youth was not awake, the Ifrit called to him and thus greatly terrified the princess who could see no one there. Aladdin rose from the bed and, going apart with the slave of the lamp so that Badrulbudur might not hear what he said, bade him bring the wazir's son from the privy, replace him in the bed, and return the bride and groom to the spot from which he had taken them in the sultan's palace. "Above all," he said, "watch over them and prevent any attempt at a caress." The Jinni withdrew the shivering young man from the privy and placed him at the princess's side; then he transported them to the marriage-chamber in the king's palace, so quickly that they could not see who or what had lifted them. Perhaps this was as well, as one sight of the slave of the lamp might have frightened them to death.

Hardly had the bridal bed been set down in its proper place, when the king and queen entered to ask after and congratulate the young pair upon their

marriage night, and to be the first to wish them a long life together. Moved by the occasion, they came up to the bed and kissed their daughter tenderly between the eyes, saying: "May your union be blessed, child of our heart! May you see the fruit of this night stretching far down the years in beauty, glory and nobility! How has the night been? How has your husband behaved?" Then they fell silent, waiting for an answer; but lo, instead of the fresh and smiling face which they had hoped to see, tear-stained cheeks were turned towards them, and instead of the joyful answer, they heard sobbing.

They went round to the husband's place and would have questioned him, but he had slipped from the room the moment they had entered it, to wash away the vile matters with which his face was slubbered. Supposing that he had gone to the hammam to take that bath which is usual after the consummation of a marriage, they turned again to their daughter and asked anxiously for the cause of her distress. As she continued silent, they supposed that it was the shame of a first night which held her so, and that her tears were the tears of circumstance; therefore they stood quietly by to give her time to collect herself. But as the moments passed and her tears showed no signs of abating, the queen said tartly: "Are you going to answer, my girl? Enough of these airs! I was once a bride myself; but I had better manners than to behave like a flustered hen. Surely you owe your father and myself a little respect?" Finding herself deserted on all sides, the princess felt that she must speak; so she answered with a heavy sigh: "Allah pardon me if I have been lacking in respect, but I am sad and troubled and confused by what happened in the night." Then she told all which had passed, as it had seemed

to her: that she had felt the bed move beneath her as soon as she lay by her husband's side; that it had been transported from the marriage-chamber to some room in an unknown house; that her husband had been taken away from her and replaced by a handsome youth who had slept by her all night, with a sword between them, and made no offer to caress her; that her husband had been returned to her in the morning, that the bed had been carried back to the palace, and that the bridegroom had slipped away to wash off a whole collection of horrible matters which smeared his face. "Even as he left me," she said, "I saw you two come into wish me happiness. Woe, woe, for death only remains to me!" She hid her face in the pillows and sobbed as if her heart would break.

The sultan and his wife looked at each other with the whites of their eyes; their faces fell into casts of despair, for they supposed that the taking of her virginity had sent their daughter mad. Not wishing to disturb her further, the queen bent over her and said coaxingly . . . :

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-fifty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"DEAR CHILD, a first night is always like that; but do not tell anyone, for these things are not usually spoken and people might suppose that you had gone mad. Get up now and think no more about it; also, wear a smile, if you can, for I do not wish your sorrowful looks to spoil the forty days of festival which

are taking place throughout all our kingdom. Think no more about it, and you will soon forget what has happened."

The queen called her women to make Badrulbudur's toilet, and went out with her astonished husband to find her son-in-law. She met the wretched young man coming from the bath, and began to question him; but he hid the whole matter, fearing to be made a laughingstock, and answered: "Why should you question me so strangely? Nothing out of the ordinary has happened." This reply confirmed the queen in her belief that the princess was suffering from some nightmare or shock to the brain; so she said: "Glory be to Allah that all has passed off without undue pain! I beg you to be very gentle with your wife, my son, for she is delicate."

Then she left him and returned to direct the day's revels from her own apartment.

Aladdin made a good guess as to what had happened at the palace, and passed the day in enjoyment of the excellent trick which he had played upon the wazir's son. But, towards evening, as he felt that it would be injudicious to allow his rival any respite, he rubbed the lamp, and said to the Jinni: "Go to the sultan's palace, O slave of the lamp, and, as soon as the bride and bridegroom are in bed, bring them to me as before." The slave of the lamp disappeared and returned almost immediately with the bed, which he set down in Aladdin's chamber. Then he took away the wazir's son and fixed him again with his head in the privy. Aladdin took the empty place beside the princess, placing a naked sword between them, and, turning to the wall, slept calmly till dawn. On the morrow the Ifrit brought back the husband and returned the bed to the palace.

The king, who was more anxious than before for news of the his daughter, came alone to the marriage-chamber, fearing to bring the queen with him lest she should give rein to her bad temper. As soon as the wazir's son heard his step approaching, he leaped from the bed and hurried from the room to cleanse himself at the hammam. The sultan came up to his daughter and tenderly embraced her, saying: "I am sure you have not had that terrible nightmare again, my dear. Tell your father how you passed the night." Instead of answering, the princess burst into tears and hid her face in her hands, that she might not see the astonished anger of the king. Her father gave her time to calm herself and then, as she went on sobbing, drew his sword and cried terribly: "I swear that I will cut off your head if you do not tell me the truth at once!"

This second terror overcame the first in the mind of poor Badrulbudur, and she answered in a broken voice: "Have pity, dearest father, and do not be angry with me; for, now that mother is not here, you will be able to listen to me. When you have heard me, I am sure you will be sorry, and guard me from the terrible death which seems to wait for me. If I have the same experience again tonight, you will find me lifeless on the bed tomorrow. Therefore have pity, and give me a compassionate hearing."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-fifty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

BEING RELIEVED OF his wife's presence and having a kindly heart, the king soothed and consoled his daughter. When her tears were dry, he said: "Now tell your father exactly what happened to put you in such a fright." The princess laid her head upon his breast and told him the whole terrible history. "And now, dearest father," she concluded, "you had better question the wazir's son, if you wish to confirm what I have said."

The sultan felt his eyes fill with tears because of the love which he bore his daughter. In his perplexity, he cried: "Alas, my child, it was my fault for marrying you to a young wretch who cannot take care of you. I only wished your happiness, my dear; how could I tell that you would be frightened to death? Now I will call that young fool and his father, and strictly demand an explanation. Whatever they say, you need have no further anxiety, for I promise on my life that these things shall not happen again." He left his daughter in charge of her women and returned to his apartments, raging with bitter anger.

He summoned his grand-wazir, and cried at him in a terrible voice: "Where is that little pimp, your son? What has he told you about these last two nights?" "I cannot guess the reason of your concern, O king of time," answered the wazir, "My son has told me nothing that would explain your rage. With your permission, I will go and question him." The wazir ran from the presence, bent double with mortification, and soon found his son in the hammam, wash-

ing off the foul substances which covered him. "You dog," he cried, "why have you not given me the truth? If you do not tell me what has happened during these last two nights, this day shall be your last." The young man hung his head, and answered: "Alas, my father, shame prevented me from telling you of the vile treatment to which I have been subjected; for I could not defend myself nor form a guess as to the author of my woes." Then he told his father the whole story in all its details. But it would be useless to repeat it in this place. "I would rather be dead than live such a life," he groaned, "Before your face, my father, I swear the oath of triple divorcement. I beg you to seek out the king and persuade him to declare that my marriage with his daughter, Badrulbudur, is null and void. That is the only way by which I can get any peace; I would much rather sleep in a bachelor's bed than pass my nights with my head in the privy." The wazir was greatly cast down by his son's words; for his highest ambition had always been to marry the lad into the royal family. Yet he was convinced by what he had heard, and exclaimed: "I agree that it is impossible for you to put up with such treatment. But think how much you will lose by this divorce! Would it not be better to have patience for one more night, if I promise to have armed guards set all about the marriage-chamber?" "You can do as you like about the guards," answered his son, "but I am never going to set foot in that ill-omened room again."

So the wazir returned to the king and stood before him with lowered head. "What have you to tell me?" asked the sultan. "That what our princess has said is true in every particular," answered the wazir, "but the fault was not with my son. One thing is certain,

Badrulbudur must not be exposed to these terrors because of my poor boy; therefore I beg that you will allow them to be divorced." "You are right," answered the king, "They are divorced. Had the bridegroom been other than your son, I would have divorced them with my sword." The king gave orders that the public rejoicing should cease throughout China, and proclaimed, by heralds, that his daughter was divorced from the son of the grand-wazir, that the marriage had never been consummated and that the princess remained a pearl, in all things pure and unpierced. Out of respect for his wazir, he named the unfortunate bridegroom governor of a far province and despatched him to his post on that same day.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-fifty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN ALADDIN LEARNT, with all the rest of the citizens, that Badrulbudur had been divorced while yet a virgin, and that her wretched husband had been banished, he cried out for very joy: "Blessed be the wonderful lamp! This is far the best thing which could have happened: the divorce has taken place without the Jinni having had to destroy that young fool utterly." He prided himself that his vengeance had matured, without the king, or the wazir, or even his mother, knowing that he had any part in the business, and set himself to wait in all tranquillity for the rest of the three months to pass. When the last

day came he sent his mother, dressed in her richest garments, to remind the sultan of his promise.

As soon as Aladdin's mother entered the diwan, the sultan recognised her and turned to the wazir, saying: "There is Aladdin's mother. You will remember that she brought us a dish full of miraculous jewels three months ago; I am sure that she now comes to demand that I fulfil my promise and marry my daughter to her son. I give great thanks to Allah that He reminded me of my oath, when I would have broken it and given Badrulbudur to another." The wazir, who still bitterly resented his humiliation, answered with some cunning: "It is true, dear master, that kings must never go back upon their word; but, also, it is the duty of every father to know something of his son-in-law. The king has made no enquiries concerning Aladdin, but I have. He is the son of a poor tailor who died in the direst poverty. How can the son of such a man be rich?" "Riches come from Allah," replied the king. "That is true," agreed the wazir, "but we have no assurance that this Aladdin is as wealthy as he would have us suppose. I suggest that the king should demand such a dowry from him as only a king's son could pay. Then, if the sum is brought, my lord may know that he has not given his daughter to one unworthy of her." "Your tongue is gifted with a wise eloquence, dear wazir," said the king, "Lead the old woman forward." The wazir signed to the captain of the guard, who conducted Aladdin's mother to the foot of the throne.

After she had kissed the earth three times between his hands, the sultan said: "Be it known to our dear aunt that we have not forgotten our promise; but nothing has so far been said concerning the dowry for our daughter; our aunt must remember that she is a

very worthy princess. . . . Tell your son that the marriage will take place when he has sent me the following treasure for my daughter: forty vast dishes of solid gold filled to the brims with those same varied jewel fruits which you brought me before on a porcelain dish; these dishes must be carried to the palace by forty girl slaves, each as beautiful as the moon, guarded by forty negro slaves, handsome and young and strong; they must come to me magnificently dressed and lay the jewels at my feet. That is all I require, good aunt. Nor do I feel justified in asking more, when I remember the present which your son has already sent me."

Terrified by this demand, Aladdin's mother prostrated herself before the throne and silently retired. When she reached home, she said to Aladdin: "Indeed, my son, I was right when I counselled you to give up all thought of Princess Badruldudur." Then, with many sighs, she told Aladdin of her reception by the king and the dowry which he demanded. "I knew you were mad," she said, "I will grant you the gold dishes and the jewels, for I believe that you would be foolhardy enough to go back to the cave and strip the magic trees; but the forty girl slaves and the forty young negroes, what will you do for them? You would never have been asked so much, my son, if it had not been for that rascally wazir; I saw him whispering into the king's ear as I went in. If you do not renounce your project, Aladdin, you will be lost beyond recall." "When I saw you come in, looking so worried, I thought that you brought bad news," answered Aladdin with a smile, "Now I see that you were but worrying about trifles, as you always do. The king's demand is nothing compared with my power to heap riches upon him. Calm your dear spirit

and refresh your eyes; leave the king to me, and go and prepare a meal, for I am very hungry."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-fifty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AS SOON AS his mother had gone out to buy food in the market, Aladdin shut himself up in his own chamber and rubbed the lamp. The Jinni appeared and bowed before him, saying: "*I am master of earth and air and wave, but slave of the lamp and the bearer's slave. What will you have, master, what will you have?*" Then said Aladdin: "O Ifrit, the sultan will give me his daughter, the marvellous Badrubudur, if I send him forty dishes of solid gold, filled to the brim with jewel fruit like those which I plucked from the trees in that garden where I found your lamp. The dishes must be borne by forty girl slaves, each as fair as the moon, and guarded by forty handsome young negroes, strong, well-built, and magnificently dressed. These things I ask of you in my turn. I command you by virtue of the lamp to bring them to me."

The slave of the lamp departed and returned immediately with eighty slaves, whom he ranged along the outside wall of the house. Each of the forty women carried on her head a vast basin of solid gold, filled to the brim with pearls, diamonds, rubies, emeralds, turquoise, and a thousand other kinds of gem, all like the fruits of trees in shape, colour and size. These jewel fruits were even more marvellous than those

which had been given to the sultan upon the porcelain dish; also, each of the basins which held them was covered by a silk gauze worked with gold flowers. As soon as the Jinni had arranged this wonderful procession, he bowed before Aladdin and was dismissed.

At that moment Aladdin's mother came back from the market, laden with provisions, and, seeing so many and such strange folk about her door, feared that the sultan had sent to chastise Aladdin for his insolence. But her son reassured her, even before she had time to take off her veil. "Do not take off your veil, dear mother," he said, "for I wish you to go forth again at once, to lead these slaves to the palace. As you see, the forty women are carrying my dowry. I beg you to accompany the train as spokeswoman, even before you get the dinner."

Aladdin's mother led forth the eighty slaves, one behind the other, in groups of two; each girl was immediately preceded by one of the young negroes, and each group was separated by an interval of ten feet. When the last group had set out, the old woman brought up the rear, while her son closed the door and retired to wait calmly on the event.

As soon as the first group reached the open street, the citizens began to crowd about them; by the time the procession was complete, the roads were blocked by an excited concourse, full of rumour and exclamation. All the markets emptied their folk to run after and admire so strange and magnificent a spectacle. Each several group was an exquisite marvel in itself; for to each there went the white beauty of a girl, the black beauty of a magnificent negro, grave cadenced walking, the fire of the gold basin, the flames of the man's belt, the sparks from off brocade. Not one who

saw these things doubted that some fabulous prince had come to their city.

The train came at last to the palace, and the guards so marvelled at the first couple that they fell back in admiration and left a clear lane for their passage. The captain of the guard, on seeing the first negro, thought that he must be the king of the negroes in person, coming to visit the Sultan; therefore he prostrated himself and would have kissed the skirt of the slave's robe. But the first negro smiled and said, as he had been instructed by the Ifrit: "We are but the slaves of him who shall come when the time is ripe." So saying, he crossed the threshold followed by the first girl, and then, at the same intervals, by the rest of those harmonious pairs. The eighty slaves crossed the first courtyard and drew up in exquisite order in the second, which gave upon the great reception hall of the palace.

The sultan, sitting upon his throne and governing the affairs of his kingdom, saw this black and white procession filling the courtyard with its splendour; therefore he dismissed the diwan and ordered the new comers to be admitted. The slaves entered gravely, two by two, and slowly ranged themselves in the form of a wide crescent before the throne. The girls, helped by their black guards, set down their gold basins upon the carpets before them; then the whole eighty prostrated themselves and kissed the earth between the king's hands. With one movement they rose and with one movement drew the gauze coverings from their loads. Then they stood impassively with their arms crossed over their breasts, in an attitude of the deepest respect.

Then, and only then, Aladdin's mother advanced to the centre of the glittering crescent and, after pros-

trating herself, said to the dumfounded king: "O sultan of time, your slave, my son Aladdin, has sent me with the dowry for your noble daughter. He has charged me to say that you have gravely undervalued the princess in your demand; but he hopes that you will excuse the meagreness of this tribute and remember that it is, if you will allow it, but the first wave of a rich and shining sea."

The king, who lay back with open mouth and wide eyes, staring first at the basins, then at the jewel fruits in the basins, then at the delightful slaves who had carried the basins, and then at the young negroes who had accompanied the girls who had carried the basins, could hardly pay attention to what Aladdin's mother was saying. He sat for an hour of time, dumbly debating the relative excellence of the girls, who might have been taken for Summer moons, and the black youths, who had the appearance of being each a king. At last, feeling too abashed to speak directly to the old woman, he turned to his wazir, exclaiming: "What shall be said of our riches before these things, or of our palace before this magnificence? What can we say of a man who is able to send us such things in less time than it took us to ask for them? How can the merits of my daughter stand against this profusion of beauty?" In spite of his bitter resentment, the wazir could not help crying: "As Allah lives, all this is marvellous enough. Yet I would not say that it is worth that treasure which is Badrulbudur." "Nay, all this outvalues her exceedingly," answered the king, "At least you cannot say that I have taken a step in the dark in marrying her to a man as rich, generous, and noble as my son, the lord Aladdin." He turned to the other wazirs, emirs, and notables who surrounded the throne and questioned them with his

eyes; and they all bowed low to the earth three times, to show that they agreed with what the king had said.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-fifty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE KING HESITATED no longer, and instead of pausing to enquire what Aladdin's other qualifications as a husband might be, turned to the old woman, saying: "O venerable mother of Aladdin, I beg you to inform your son that, from this moment, he is one of my royal house and line, and that I wait impatiently to embrace him as my son and to marry him by the Book to my daughter, Badruldur."

Aladdin's mother ran more swiftly than the wind, until she found her son at home and told him what had passed. Aladdin was overjoyed at the news, after his long waiting, but he did not wish to show how drunk he was with rapture. Quite calmly he answered: "All this happiness comes from Allah and from your blessing upon me, dear mother, and from your tireless zeal in my cause." He kissed her hands with many murmurs of thanks, and then begged leave to retire to his chamber to prepare for the coming visit.

As soon as he was alone, he rubbed the lamp and said to the Jinni who came and bowed before him: "O slave of the lamp, I wish to take a bath and, after the bath, I wish a robe more magnificent than the greatest king of earth has set aside for the greatest

occasions; it must be so beautiful that experts will judge that it cost at least a thousand thousand dinars. That is all for the moment."

The slave of the lamp bended his back completely, saying: "O master of the lamp, mount upon my shoulders." Aladdin mounted, letting his legs hang over the broad breast; and the Ifrit, whose contact made the youth also invisible, rose in the air and carried him to such a hammam as the kings and rulers of the earth have never seen. It was made all of jade and transparent alabaster, with pools of rose carnelian and white coral. The ornamentation was a cunning pattern of large emeralds; the eyes and every other organ of sense rejoiced together in this place, for each thing, alone and in the general harmony, was perfection. The air was of a delicate freshness, cool where that was suitable and of a balanced heat where such was fitting. No bather troubled the peace of those white vaults; but when the slave of the lamp had set Aladdin upon the dais in the entrance hall, a young Ifrit of immortal beauty, like, but infinitely more engaging than, a girl, appeared before the boy and helped him to undress. Then he threw a perfumed towel about Aladdin's shoulders, raised him tenderly, and led him to the fairest of the halls of that bath, one which was paved with a close-set pattern of jewels. Then other young Ifrits, as handsome and ensnaring, received him from the hands of their companion and, after reclining him comfortably upon a marble bench, began to rub him and wash him with scented water of different flowers. They kneaded his limbs with admirable art and then laved them again with musk-scented rose-water. Their skilled care gave his skin the fresh tint of a rose petal, compact of white and vermillion; and he felt so light that he was tempted to

fly like a bird. The first youth came for him again and led him back to the dais, where he refreshed him with a sherbert of musk and snow and summer flowers. When he had drunk, Aladdin found the slave of the lamp standing before him with a robe which it would be impossible for me to describe. Helped by his attendant's pleasant hands, he put this magnificence upon him and became like the dream of some great king's son. As soon as he was dressed the Ifrit lifted him and carried him back to the chamber of his house.

"And now do you know what more I want?" asked Aladdin. "I do not know, O master of the lamp," replied the Ifrit, "But command and I shall obey." Then said Aladdin: "I desire that you bring me a horse of pure breed who has no brother in all the world for beauty, no, not even in the stables of kings. His harnessing must be worth at least a thousand thousand golden dinars. At the same time you will bring forty-eight graceful slaves, richly, cleanly, and elegantly clad, of which twenty-four, in two files of twelve, shall clear the way before my horse, and the other twenty-four, in two files of twelve, bring up the rear. Also, be careful to select twelve girls of incomparable and moonlike beauty, each the pet example of her race, to serve my mother. Each must bring a different coloured robe with her, worthy the wearing of a king's daughter. Lastly, you must hang about the neck of each of the forty-eight slaves a bag containing five thousand dinars of gold, so that I may have money when it pleases me. That is all that I wish for today."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-fifty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HARDLY HAD ALADDIN finished speaking when the Jinni disappeared and returned with the horse, the forty-eight young slaves, the twelve girls, the forty-eight bags of gold, and the twelve robes of different stuff and colour. All these things were finer in their quality even than Aladdin had required. He dismissed the Ifrit, saying: "I will call you when I have need." Then he kissed his mother's hands in leave-taking and gave her into the care of the twelve girls, bidding them serve her in everything and teach her the correct usage of the robes which they had brought.

Aladdin mounted his horse and left the courtyard; although it was the first time he had been in the saddle he rode with such accomplishment that chosen cavaliers might have envied him. Two files of twelve slaves opened the way for him, four slaves at his sides held up the cords from the housing of his horse, and the rest followed after.

A mighty crowd, greater than that which had greeted the jewel slaves, ran together from the markets and flocked in windows and upon terraces to see Aladdin's train go by; for there was no more room in the streets. At their master's order, the forty-eight slaves threw handfuls of gold among the crowd to right and left, so that great cheers rang through the city for the generosity and surpassing beauty of this rider and his slaves. Aladdin on horseback was a handsome sight to see; the natural garden of his face had been rendered more excellent by the virtues of the lamp; and, as he rode, the diamond feather in his

turban streamed back like light itself. In an uproar of acclamation Aladdin came to the palace; but the rumour of his approach had gone before him, and the royalty of China was prepared to do him honour.

The king himself waited at the top of the stair which led down to the second courtyard and, as soon as Aladdin had dismounted with the aid of the grand wazir, he walked down three of the stairs to do him reverence. Aladdin mounted to meet him and would have prostrated himself; but the sultan, who marvelled at the richness of the boy's dress and the nobility of his bearing, received him in his arms and embraced him as if he had been his own son. Then the air shook with the concerted joy of the emirs, wazirs, and guards, and with the sound of trumpets, clarinets, hautbois, and drums. With one arm passed about Aladdin's neck, the king led him into the vast reception hall and, after making him sit beside him on the bed of the throne, embraced him a second time. "As Allah lives, my son," he said, "I grieve that my destiny has not made us acquainted before today, and am sorry that I delayed your marriage with your slave, Badrulbudur, for these three months." Aladdin answered with such charming suitability that the sultan's love for him increased, and he continued: "There is no king on the earth who would not wish you for a son-in-law, Aladdin." Then he spoke affectionately with the youth, wondering at the wit and eloquence of his replies, while a magnificent feast was prepared before them. When all was ready, they ate alone in the throne room, served by the grand-wazir, whose nose trailed almost to the ground for spite, and by emirs and other high dignitaries of the court.

As soon as they were satisfied, the king, who was more than ever mindful of his promise, called the kadi

and witnesses, and bade them write out a marriage contract for Aladdin and the Princess Badrulbudur. The kadi obeyed, with all due observance to the forms of the sacred Book, and, when he had finished, the sultan embraced Aladdin for the third time, saying: "My son, do you wish to enter the marriage-chamber tonight, and consummate your vows?" "O king of time," answered Aladdin, "if I were not to listen to the great love which I have for my wife, I would go into her this very night. But as I wish the consummation to be made in a palace worthy of my love and belonging to her alone, allow me to put off the full realisation of my delight until I have built for her the palace of my dreams. For this purpose, I pray that you will allow me to take possession of the vast square opposite your own palace, so that my wife may not be too far separated from her father, and I myself may be near enough to serve you in everything. I can promise that the building will be set about without delay." "My son, it is hardly necessary for you to ask permission," answered the king, "Take all the ground that you require in front of my palace, and hasten on the work of construction, for I wish to see another generation of my posterity before I die." Aladdin reassured the king with a smile and, after embracing him tenderly in farewell, returned to his own house, accompanied as before, amid the loud wishes of the people.

After telling his mother what had passed, he retired to his own chamber and rubbed the lamp once more.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-sixtieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN THE IFRIT appeared, Aladdin said to him: "First, O slave of the lamp, I have to praise the zeal which you have shown in my service. Now I have a more difficult task to set you: I wish you to build me, with the least possible delay, a palace worthy of my bride, on the open ground in front of the sultan's dwelling. I leave to your good taste and proven knowledge the details of its ornament and the choice of such precious material as jade, porphyry, alabaster, agate, lazuli, jasper, marble, and granite. But I insist upon one particular: in the middle of the palace you must raise me a vast crystal dome, supported by columns of alternate gold and silver, and pierced by ninety-nine windows, crusted and set about with diamonds, rubies, and emeralds. The ninety-ninth window you must leave unornamented, though perfect in construction. Do not forget to lay out a fair garden with fountains and watercourses, and to give great breadth to the courtyards. Also, I require you to construct a secret underground chamber and fill it with a rich treasure in gold coin. I leave such things as the kitchens, the stables, and the provision of slaves, to your good sense and liberal mind. When all is ready, come and tell me." "I hear and I obey," answered the Jinni, as he carried his hand to his brow and disappeared.

At the morrow's dawn the Ifrit came to Aladdin's bed, saying: "Master of the lamp, your will has been done. I pray you, come and approve the fruit of it." Aladdin agreed, and the Ifrit carried him off and

showed him a palace, standing opposite the king's and infinitely more noble, set in a fine garden and approached by two broad marble walks. After pointing out the admirable structure of the whole, the slave of the lamp took his master to examine the interior in detail; and Aladdin found that his orders had been carried out with unimaginable splendour and a luxury even beyond the power of his wishing. He inspected the vast secret treasure-house below the earth, crammed with sacks of golden dinars; he saw the kitchens, offices, store houses, and stables, and found them vast, clean, and pleasing to him. He admired the horses and mares, feeding from silver mangers, or being dressed by expert grooms. He reviewed the slaves and eunuchs according to their rank and then, turning to the Ifrit, who was invisible to all else, sincerely congratulated him on his marvellous preparation. "You have only forgotten one thing," he said, "a carpet from this palace to the other, so that my wife may pass across without wearying her feet." "You are right," answered the slave of the lamp, "but the thing is already done." And lo, a cloud-soft carpet of velvet stretched between the two palaces, glowing with every tint of meadow and garden!

"Now all is perfect," cried Aladdin, "and you may take me back to my house." The Ifrit lifted him and took him back to his house, just as the folk of the sultan's palace began to open the doors and set about their occupations of the day.

As they came forth, the slaves and porters fell back aghast to find the mighty ground in front of the palace blocked by a structure even more imposing, and to see a cloud-soft velvet carpet stretching before them and entering the garden opposite, where the blossoms and leaves and grasses of its texture vied with the natural

lawns and flowerbeds on either hand. Their eyes followed beyond the carpet and saw the palace blazing with jewels, its crystal dome appearing above the roofs like the rising of the sun. They reported these things to the grand-wazir, who carried news of them to the king, saying: "Sultan of time, there can be no doubt that our Lady Badrulbudur's husband is a skilled magician." "Your insinuation surprises me, O wazir," replied the king, "You should know that a man who can make such presents must be rich and powerful enough to have a palace constructed in a single night by natural means. Surely you are blinded by jealousy?"

Realising that the king loved Aladdin too much to be influenced against him, the wazir became prudently silent. So much for him.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-sixty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AS SOON AS ALADDIN reached his home, he bade one of his mother's twelve slaves waken the old woman, and commanded the whole delightful band to dress her in one of the magnificent robes which they had brought. When she was dressed, he told her that the time had come for her to conduct the bride from the king's palace to his own, and gave her instructions as to her behaviour at such a time. Aladdin's mother set out with her twelve girls, and Aladdin himself followed soon after on horseback with his train. The two troops separated when they came between the

palaces, Aladdin turning into his new abode and his mother entering the sultan's gateway.

The king received Aladdin's mother with every mark of respect, and ordered his chief eunuch to take her to Badrulbudur in the harem. The princess rose in her honour and embraced her; then, begging her to be seated, she had her served with sweet cakes and preserves, and bade the slaves continue with her own toilet. Just as her women had finished decking the new bride with the fairest of the jewels which her lord had sent, the sultan entered the harem. As the two were now related, he was able to see the face of Aladdin's mother unveiled for the first time. He easily perceived, from the delicate lines of her face, that she had been very beautiful in youth; even now, when she was dressed and tended so carefully, she had an air of greater nobility than many of the princesses and emirs' wives about the court. He complimented her gracefully upon her appearance, and so touched the heart of the tailor's widow that her eyes filled with happy tears.

The three talked together pleasantly, learning each other more and more, until the queen came in and, after greeting Aladdin's mother with sufficient politeness, sat among them, without paying any attention to the conversation. She disapproved of the marriage of her daughter to an unknown young man, and took sides with the grand-wazir; but, because of her husband, she dared not openly betray her feelings.

When the time came for the princess to leave for her new home, she embraced her father and mother very tenderly, mingling most proper tears with a thousand kisses. Aladdin's mother led her out, preceded by ten eunuchs in their state dresses and followed by a hundred girls as pleasantly habited as dragonflies.

Four hundred slaves, alternate black and white, were drawn up in two rows from one palace to the other; they held golden torches in which burned large candles of amber and white camphor. The princess passed slowly between these living walls, treading the velvet meadows of the carpet, while musicians played sweet welcome from the garden alleys and palace terraces; far away the happy shouting of the people added a note of good augury to this concerted music. Aladdin came smiling to meet his bride, and she, on seeing her bright handsome, was pleased to be led into the feast hall under the glowing windows of the dome. The three sat down to a meal prepared on gold plate by the slave of the lamp; and Aladdin had his place between the two women. They ate and drank to the sound of songs from invisible singers in the air, boy and girl Ifrits chanting in chorus, and Badrulbudur said to herself: "I did not know that there were such marvels anywhere." She would stop eating and drinking to listen and to look, nor was there need for Aladdin and his mother to ply her with food and wine for she had eaten and drunk deep of miracles.

That was such a day as was not seen in the times of Iskander and of Sulayman.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-sixty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN NIGHT CAME, the platters were taken away and a troop of four hundred dancers came into the hall. These were the daughters of Marids and Ifrits,

having the movement of birds and being dressed like flowers; to an airy music they danced those dances which the maidens use in Paradise. Then Aladdin took his wife by the hand and led her, with cadenced steps, to the marriage-chamber. The girl slaves, led by Aladdin's mother, followed in good order. They undressed Badrulbudur, and she was like a narcissus slipping from the green shawl of its youth. They left the chamber, and Aladdin was joined to Badrulbudur, the king's daughter. That was such a night as was not seen in the times of Iskander and of Sulayman.

At dawn, after the dark hours of delight, Aladdin left the princess's arms and, dressing himself magnificently, mounted a superb horse from the stables, to visit the sultan. The king rejoiced at his coming and, after kissing him, asked for news of Badrulbudur. Aladdin made the expected answer, and added: "I have hastened to you thus early, O king of time, to beg that you will light my palace with your presence and partake with us of the first meal after our coming together. I trust that you will bring the grand-wazir and your emirs to do us honour." The sultan accepted immediately and left the palace with Aladdin, followed by his grand-wazir and the emirs.

With every step towards his daughter's dwelling, the sultan's admiration grew greater, his cries of astonishment more shrill. What then shall be said of his marvelling eyes when he saw the interior of that sumptuous building? But, above every other harmony and magnificence, he preferred the hall of the crystal dome, with its airy columns springing to meet the jewelled fires of the high windows. He counted the number of the windows and found that there were ninety-nine, neither more nor less; also he saw that the last window was unfinished and lacked ornament.

"This is the most remarkable palace of its time upon earth," he said, "I can find no word for my admiration. . . . But I wish to know why that window has not been finished; for it mars the perfection of the whole." "O king of time," answered Aladdin with a smile, "do not think that this window is forgotten, or that I have let it appear as it does, through economy or negligence. I wished, if I may make so bold, to leave it to my lord the sultan to finish that work, so that the glory of his name and reign might, as it were, be worked into one of the stones of his daughter's dwelling, and thus consecrate it as worthy of her for all time." The king was flattered by this attention, and thanked Aladdin for the delicacy of his thought. He sent his guards at once to collect the cleverest craftsmen in jewellery and those who had the largest stock of gems, to complete the incrustation of the window. While waiting for them to come, he went to see his daughter and asked news of her first night; the pleased smile with which she answered was sufficient to set all his fears at rest. He embraced Aladdin again and congratulated him in suitable terms. Then he accompanied the wedded pair to a meal at which he found the meats beyond question perfect to the taste, and the silverware altogether admirable.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-sixty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SOON THE JEWELLERS and goldsmiths were led in by the guards and conducted to the gallery below the

dome, where the king climbed up to interview them. He showed them the unfinished window, saying: "I require you to finish the necessary work upon this window, incrusting your patterns in pearls and every colour of precious stone." The jewellers and goldsmiths bowed before him and then closely examined the decoration of the other windows, exchanging astonished glances from time to time as they did so. After they had consulted together, they prostrated themselves before the sultan, saying: "O king of time, we have not in all our shops enough gems to decorate one hundredth part of this window." "I will furnish you with what is necessary," answered the king; and he had the jewel fruit of Aladdin's dowry brought to them. "Use what you need and give me back the rest," he said. The jewellers took measurements and made calculations, checking and checking their results. Then they said humbly: "O king of time, these jewel fruits will not be enough to ornament one tenth of the window." So the king called to his guards: "Go to the houses of my wazirs, emirs, and rich notables; collect all the precious stones which they have, and bring them to me." The guards hurried forth to execute this order.

While waiting for their return, Aladdin, who observed signs of uneasiness in the king and was mightily pleased by them, wished to distract him with some music. He signed to one of his attendant Ifrits, who led in a troop of singing girls so fair that each might have said to the moon: "Begone, that I may take your place!" and with such pure voices that each might have said to the nightingale: "Be silent, and hear me sing!" Their choruses relieved the king's embarrassment for a time.

But as soon as the guards came back and handed

over to the jewellers all the gems which they had spoiled from the richest houses in the capital, the king said to the craftsmen: "And now?" "As Allah lives, dear master," they answered, "we are still very short of the account. We need at least eight times as much material as we have here; also, however fast we worked, it would take us three months of unremitting toil to decorate the window."

The king felt his nose nigh brush his feet for bitter shame, and Aladdin, satisfied that he had sufficiently proved his power, said to the jewellers: "Take back your stocks of precious stones, and go your way," then to the guards: "Return those jewels to their owners," and lastly to the king: "Sultan of time, it would not be becoming of me to receive back that which I have given. I trust that you will allow me to return the jewel fruits and take upon myself the ornamentation of this window. As I cannot bear to be watched while I work, I pray you to wait for me with my wife Badruldur." So the king betook himself to the chamber of the princess.

Aladdin drew the magic lamp from a nacre cabinet and with it summoned the Ifrit. "Slave of the lamp," he said, when the Jinni appeared, "I wish you to make the ninety-ninth window exactly like its fellows." The slave of the lamp withdrew and immediately there sounded a multitudinous and invisible hammering and filing about the window; in less time than it takes a thirsty man to drink a cup of water, the ninety-ninth window glittered with intricate jewel work and might not be recognised from its fellows.

At Aladdin's entreaty the sultan came up to the gallery; but he supposed at first that he had mistaken one side of it for the other. It was not until he had circled the dome several times that he realised that,

the work had been completed. As soon as he was convinced of the truth, he kissed Aladdin between the eyes, saying: "The more I know of you, my son, the more I love you."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-sixty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE KING CALLED his grand-wazir and pointed out the marvel of the window to him. "What do you think now, O wazir?" he asked in a voice of irony; and the wazir, though he was surer than ever that Aladdin was a sorcerer, a heretic, and an alchemical philosopher, thought it prudent to answer: "Allah alone is great!"

From that time, the sultan spent the evening of each day with Aladdin and Badruldur, finding new marvels in the palace on every visit. Aladdin did not let himself be puffed up or softened by this new life; instead, he devoted those hours when he was not with his wife to improving the condition of those about him and finding objects for his generosity among the poor of the city. He did not forget the poverty of his childhood, and every time he rode abroad his slaves were ordered to scatter gold dinars among the crowd. Twice a day the broken food from the palace was distributed among the destitute, and sufficed to feed five thousand. Aladdin's generosity and modesty drew the hearts of the city to him, so that there was none, high or low, who did not mention this new benefactor

in his prayers. He put the seal upon his popularity by winning a great victory against certain tribes which had revolted from the sultan. In this engagement he showed a warlike quality and reckless courage, which made Badrulbudur love him more ardently than ever. She never grew weary of congratulating herself that she had found the one man worthy to be her husband. For many years Aladdin's existence was an unbroken harmony of happiness, in the love of his wife and mother, in the love of the people, and in the admiring love of his father-in-law. So much for Aladdin.

Now we will turn to the Moorish magician, who had been the unwilling and unconscious first cause of Aladdin's happiness. When he had left the boy to die of hunger and thirst in the cave, he returned to his own land in the interior of far Morocco and spent his days in mourning over the useless pains which he had taken to secure the lamp. He brooded over the fatality which had snatched from his lips a morsel which he had confectioned with so much care, and not an hour passed without his cursing the day when he had met Aladdin. On one occasion, when the bitterness of his gall rose even to his lips, he felt that he must become acquainted with all the details of Aladdin's death. So he took his table of divinatory sand from a mystical cupboard and, seating himself before it on a square mat within a red circle, flattened the sand, marked the male and female points, set out the mothers and children of that art, and murmured geomantic spells above them. "Let me behold, O sand, let me behold," he cried, "Where is the magic lamp? How did Aladdin die?" He shook the sand according to the canons of sorcery, so that the figures grew and the horoscope was formed. He looked upon

these things and learnt that Aladdin was alive, that he was master of the lamp, that he lived in honoured splendour, married to the Princess Badrulbudur, daughter of the king of China, and that he was known to all the frontiers of the world as Aladdin the Great Emir. As soon as his evil operations had given him these unexpected tidings, the sorcerer foamed at the mouth and spat into the air and upon the ground, crying: "O son of bastards and bitches, I spit in your face! Black dog, foul gallows-bird, I spit upon your head!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-sixty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

FOR AN HOUR the Moor spat in the air and upon the earth, for an hour he trampled his imagination of Aladdin beneath his feet, swearing terrible oaths and screaming out insults, until he felt a little calmer. Then he swore to be revenged upon Aladdin because he had gained the lamp. He set out immediately for China; and, as his rage lent him wings, he made no pauses in his journey but meditated the means of his vengeance as he was borne along. Soon he arrived in the capital city of China. He alighted at a khan where he secured a lodging, and started next morning to explore the public places of the city. Wherever he went he heard tell of nothing but the emir Aladdin, the beauty of the emir Aladdin, the generosity of the emir Aladdin, and the magnificence of the emir Alad-

din. "By light and fire," he muttered to himself, "they will soon be calling out for the death of the emir Aladdin." When he came to Aladdin's palace and saw what a noble thing that was, he cried: "So the tailor's son lives here; the little lad who had no bread! Aladdin, Aladdin, you shall soon see that my destiny cries in the top of yours; your mother shall spin again, and with my own hands I shall dig the ditch where she shall come to weep." By entering into conversation with the doorkeeper he found that Aladdin had gone upon a hunting expedition which had already lasted several days. "This is the beginning of his fall," he thought, "I can work more freely while he is away. But first I must know whether he has taken the lamp with him or left it at the palace." For this purpose he returned to his room in the khan and questioned his geomantic table. The horoscope told him that Aladdin had left the lamp in the palace.

Drunken with joy, he made his way to the market of the coppersmiths, and entered the shop of one who sold copper lamps. "I need twelve new polished copper lamps," he said; and, when the merchant produced a dozen shining lamps, he paid the price without bargaining and placed his purchases in a basket, which he had already procured.

Then he wandered through the streets towards Aladdin's palace, crying: "New lamps! New lamps! New lamps for old!" Seeing his large turban and hearing his unaccustomed cry, all the little street boys left their games and ran after him, hooting and chanting: "Mad! He is mad!" But the Moor took no notice and easily drowned the sound of their yelling with: "New lamps! New lamps! New lamps for old!" Followed by the shouting and jostling boys, he came to the place in front of the palace and began to

walk up and down, up and down, crying his cry louder and louder as time went on. At last Badrulbudur, who happened to be in the hall of the ninety-nine windows, heard this unaccustomed clamour and opened one of the jewelled lattices.

She saw the excited squealing crowd of urchins, and heard distinctly the strange offer of the Moor. So she laughed and her women laughed with her. But one of them said to her: "Dear mistress, when I was tidying our master's chamber yesterday, I saw an old copper lamp standing on a stool. May I show it to the old Moor and see if he will in truth exchange it for a new one?" Now this old lamp was none other than the magic lamp, which Aladdin had forgotten to shut up in its nacre cabinet before he went away. Who can war against the decrees of Destiny? Princess Badrulbudur knew nothing of this lamp or of its marvellous powers, so she answered: "Certainly. Give the lamp to a eunuch and tell him to try to exchange it for a new one. If he succeeds, we will be able to laugh at that old fool."

The girl went to Aladdin's chamber, took the lamp, and gave it to a eunuch, who left the palace and showed it to the Moor, saying: "My mistress would exchange this lamp for a new one."

When the magician saw the lamp, he recognised it at once and began to tremble. "What is the matter?" asked the eunuch, "Is the lamp too old for you?" But the Moor had already fought down his agitation; he snatched the lamp, with the swiftness of the vulture pouncing upon a dove, and hid it in his bosom. Then he held out his basket to the eunuch, saying: "Take your choice." The eunuch picked out a fire-new and highly-polished lamp, and carried it quickly to Badrulbudur, with peals of laughter at the folly of the

Moorish merchant. So much for the eunuch and Aladdin's lamp.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-sixty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE MAGICIAN HURLED his basket of lamps at the hooting mob of boys, and ran away from the palace, dodging down a thousand bye-streets of the city until he had thrown off all possible pursuit. When he came to a deserted place, he drew the lamp from his bosom and rubbed it. The slave of the lamp appeared, and cried: "*I am master of earth and air and wave, but slave of the lamp and the bearer's slave. What will you have, master, what will you have?*" For the Ifrit had to obey the owner of the lamp, even though he were vowed to wickedness and perdition, as was this Moor.

"Slave of the lamp," said the Moor, "I order you to snatch up the palace which you built for Aladdin, and to transport it, with all its contents, to my country at the back of Morocco, and there set it down among its gardens. You will carry me also." Then said the slave of the lamp: "Shut one eye and open one eye and you will find yourself in Aladdin's palace in your own land." In a flash the thing was done, and the Moor found himself in Aladdin's palace in the wild parts of Morocco. So much for him.

Next morning the sultan left his palace to visit Badrulbudur, according to his custom; but there was no

palace, only a large waste space, cut by empty ditches of the foundations. At first he rubbed his eyes, thinking that he had gone mad; and then the beams of the rising sun and the limpid morning air persuaded him that he was seeing the truth. To make quite sure, he climbed to the highest story of his own palace and looked out of a window; but there was no palace, only a waste of space over which, had it not been for the ditches, riders might have galloped their horses.

The unhappy father wept and plucked at his beard, though he did not then know the full extent of his loss. While he moaned upon a couch, his grand-wazir came to him to announce that the diwan was assembled. "Come here," said the king; and, when the wazir had approached, cried out angrily: "What has become of my daughter's palace?" "Allah have the king in His keeping!" answered the wazir, "I do not understand what he would say." "Then you know nothing?" asked the king sadly. "I know nothing, nothing at all," answered the wazir. "That is because you have not looked out towards Aladdin's palace," said the king. "I walked in its gardens yesterday at evening," ventured the wazir, "but I saw nothing unusual, except that the great door was shut because the emir was from home." The king led the wazir to the window and made him look forth. "Far be the Evil One!" cried the old man, "The palace has disappeared! Now will you not admit, my lord, that the whole thing was the work of a most skilful sorcery?" The king lowered his head and reflected for an hour, then raised his head and exclaimed terribly: "Where is that wretch, that adventurer, that sorcerer, that impostor? Where is that son of a thousand dogs, who calls himself Aladdin?" The wazir's heart swelled with triumph as he answered: "He is still hunting,

but has promised to return today before the noon prayer. Shall I go forth to meet him and ask him what has happened to his palace?" "By Allah, you shall do nothing of the sort!" shouted the king, "Let him be dragged before me in chains, for the robber and liar that he is!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-sixty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE WAZIR PASSED on this order to the captain of the guard, who rode out of the city with a hundred followers, and met Aladdin at a distance of five parasangs from the gate. He surrounded him with guards, and said: "O emir Aladdin, O our master, we pray you to excuse us; but we are the slaves of the sultan, and he has ordered us to drag you before him in chains. We cannot disobey him, but we are also heavily in debt to your bounty, and ask again to be excused."

For a moment Aladdin was dumb with surprise and consternation, but soon he answered: "Good folk, do you know why the sultan acts in this way, when I am innocent of any crime against him or the State?" "As Allah lives, we do not know," answered the captain of the guard; so Aladdin got down from his horse, exclaiming: "Carry out your orders; for the king's command is binding upon any loyal subject." The guards regretfully wound a heavy chain about his arms and neck and waist, and made him follow them on foot while they rode back to the city.

As soon as they came to the outlying walls, the citizens, seeing Aladdin treated in this way, supposed that the king would have him beheaded for some unknown cause; therefore, as he was dearly loved by all for his affable generosity, they closed in behind him, arming themselves with swords, bludgeons, sticks and stones. This threatening escort had grown to thousands upon thousands by the time the prisoner had been led to the back of the palace; and there was such hooting and menace of rude weapons that the guards were hardly able to take their captive into the palace without being torn to pieces. After Aladdin disappeared from their sight, the people continued to howl outside the gates, demanding that their emir be returned to them.

The sultan's rage was so great that he did not even ask for an explanation when Aladdin appeared before him; instead, he cried out to his executioner: "Cut off this vile impostor's head at once!" The executioner led Aladdin out on to the terrace above the mob and made him kneel upon the red leather of death; then he bandaged his eyes, took off the chain, and said: "Make your peace with Allah!" But, even as the man flashed his sword three times about his head, the crowd below, with an angry bellowing, began to climb the walls and force the doors. In an extreme of terror, the king cried to his executioner: "Do not strike the blow!" and to the captain of his guard: "Tell the people that I give them back this wretch's life." This announcement was made from the terrace and calmed the tumult of the mob, so that they left the doors and descended from the walls.

Aladdin's eyes had been ostentatiously unbandaged to convince his following; now he rose from the bloody mat and said with tears: "O king of time, I beg you

tell me what I have done to earn so great a disgrace?" "What have you done?" answered the king furiously, "You pretend not to know? Then follow me." He led him to the other side of the palace, which overlooked the site of Aladdin's vanished dwelling, and bade him look through a window. Aladdin looked and saw no palace and no garden; no sign, save the ditches, that garden or palace had ever been. The world grew dark before his eyes and he could not speak. "O vile impostor," cried the king, "where is my daughter, the stone of my heart's fruit, my only child?" Aladdin uttered a despairing sigh, and answered: "O king of time, I do not know." Then said the sultan: "Listen well; I do not ask you to bring back your evil palace, but if you do not return my daughter to me at once, your head shall answer for it." Aladdin reflected for an hour with lowered eyes, and then replied: "O king of time, none may escape his destiny. If it is my fate to be beheaded for a crime which I have not committed, nothing can save me. But I have a right to ask a delay of forty days in which to hunt for my beloved; for she has gone through no fault of mine and also I swear, by our sacred Faith and by the merits of our lord Muhamad (on whom be prayer and peace!), without my knowledge." "I grant you that delay," said the king, "but after it has passed nothing can save you from my wrath. If you do not return my daughter, I will find means to fetch you back from the uttermost parts of the earth to a terrible punishment." Aladdin left the presence with bowed head, and the dignitaries who saw him passing across the palace could not recognise him, for he was so changed by grief. He wandered through the waiting crowd, asking with haggard eyes: "Where is my palace? Where is my wife?" and the people said to each other:

“Poor Aladdin, the sultan’s cruelty has driven him mad!” Finding himself an object of compassion, Aladdin hastily left the city at haphazard and fled through the open country.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-sixty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE CAME AT last to a great river, and as he looked into its obscure depths, he thought: “It is useless to seek Badruldur, for I know nothing of her fate. It were better to drown all thought in the waves of this river.” But then he remembered that he was a Musulman and, lifting up his heart, bore witness to the unity of Allah and the mission of His Prophet. This act of faith and subjection comforted him, and, instead of casting himself into the water, he knelt down to make his ablution for the evening prayer. Squatting on the bank, he took up water in the hollows of his hands and began to work the fingers together. This movement caused him to rub the ring which the Moor had given him for protection in the cave. As he knelt, the Ifrit of the ring bowed down before him, saying: “*I am master of earth and air and wave, but slave of the ring and the wearer’s slave. What will you have, master, what will you have?*” Aladdin recognised the apparition by its hideous aspect and terrifying voice; he sprang to his feet and cried delightedly: “May Allah bless you, O slave of the ring, O friend in need and deed! I pray you to bring me back my

palace and my wife." "Master of the ring, that cannot be," answered the Ifrit, "I am only the slave of the ring and may not undo the work of the slave of the lamp." "In that case, O slave of the ring," exclaimed Aladdin in his perplexity, "since you may not meddle with a business that seems not to concern you, since you may not bring the palace back to me, I order you, by the virtue of the ring you serve, to carry me to the palace and set me down beneath the windows of my wife, Badrulbudur." As he finished speaking, he found himself set down gently beneath the windows of the princess in his own magnificent garden, far in the wilds of Morocco. The sight of his palace tranquillised his soul and caused him to draw easy breath; hope came back to his heart and joy came with her. Just as a man who has given a sheep's head to be cooked cannot lie down and sleep until he has seen it come perfect from the oven, so Aladdin could not rest, though he was worn by grief and wandering. He thanked Allah for the fortunate turn which his adventure had taken and then stood up in full view of the windows.

Since she had been snatched away with the palace, the princess had been tortured both by grief for her husband and by fear of the magician's wooing; therefore she neither ate nor drank, and ever rose before dawn from the couch on which she had not slept. On that evening when Aladdin rubbed the ring, a certain slave, guided by the hand of Destiny, had opened one of the windows in the crystal hall and, as she looked forth, was saying: "Dear mistress, come and see how lovely the trees look in the airs of evening." Suddenly she uttered a great cry: "My master, my master! There is my master, Aladdin, under the windows!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-sixty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

BADRULBUDUR RUSHED to the window, and the parted lovers recognised each other. "Come, come quickly, my dear one," cried Badrulbudur, who was the first to recover herself, "you need have no fear, the magician is away." The slave ran down and opened a secret door, by which Aladdin gained access to his wife's chamber. Laughing and crying, as if joy had made them drunk, they fell into each other's arms. It was not for some minutes, when they were seated more calmly side by side, that Aladdin said: "Before all else, Badrulbudur, tell me what has become of that copper lamp which I left on a stool in my chamber, before I went off to hunt." "Dearest, that lamp was the cause of all our misery," cried the princess, "but it was not entirely my fault that it should have been so." She told Aladdin of the exchange of lamps, and added: "After he brought me here, the wicked Moor told me of the lamp's virtue; he said that, by its means, he had carried our palace into Morocco." "What does he want of you?" asked Aladdin, without the least reproach. "He comes to me each day and tries to seduce me to his will," replied Badrulbudur, "To conquer my repulsion, he always insists that you have been beheaded by the king as an impostor, and that you are only the son of a miserable tailor, called Mustapha; he claims that you owe all your honour

and fortune to his own kindness. On each occasion I have received him with silence and turned head, so that he has retired with drooping nose. But I am always afraid that he will use violence. I thank Allah that He has sent you to me!" "Now tell me where he keeps the lamp," said Aladdin. "He never leaves it in the palace," answered Badrulbudur. "He carries it in his bosom wherever he goes. Once he drew it forth to taunt me with it." "That is well, that is very well!" exclaimed Aladdin, "His punishment shall be our salvation. Now, leave me alone for a moment in this room."

As soon as Badrulbudur departed, Aladdin rubbed the ring on his finger, and said to the Ifrit who appeared in answer to his summons: "Slave of the ring, are you learned in the matter of soporific powders?" "I understand them better than anything else," answered the Ifrit. "Then bring me an ounce of Cretan banj," commanded Aladdin, "and let it be strong enough to kill an elephant." The Ifrit vanished and returned in a moment with a tube, which he handed to Aladdin, saying: "Here is Cretan banj of the finest quality." Aladdin dismissed the Jinni and called to Badrulbudur. "Dear love," he said, when she came in, "we can get the better of that vile sorcerer, if you will do exactly what I say. Now listen carefully, for time presses and he may arrive at any moment." He gave her minute instructions, and handed her the tube of banj; then he hid himself in a large cupboard and waited for the coming of the Moor.

Badrulbudur did not like the part which had been assigned to her, but she rose and allowed her women to comb and coil her hair in the fashion which most suited the perfect pride of her face. Then she dressed

herself in her fairest robe, girt herself with a gold belt blazing with diamonds, and hung a collar of equal pearls about her neck. When she had clasped heavily jewelled bangles upon her wrists and ankles, and had been perfumed with seven sorts of scent, she looked like some houri chosen to be queen of Paradise. She regarded herself tenderly in the mirror, while her women crowded round with cries of admiration, and then posed herself amorously among her cushions.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-seventieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE MOOR CAME at his usual hour; the princess rose in his honour for the first time and with a smile begged him to be seated beside her. The magician was delighted at being so well received and, because of the light from those lovely eyes, dared only sit upon the edge of the diwan. "You must not be astonished, dear master, because I am changed today," said the princess, with a languishing glance, "My nature is opposed to sadness and now has conquered my grief. I have reflected on my husband's death and realise that the decree of Destiny must run its course. My tears cannot recall him, and therefore I have put aside my tears . . . But I have not offered you any refreshment." She rose in her flowerlike beauty and moved over to a broad stool, loaded with wines and sherberts. With her back to the Moor, she cast a pinch of the banj into a gold cup of honour which was al-

ready filled with wine, and bade one of her slaves carry it to the magician. "This is less than the smile of your eyes, O princess," said the Moor, as he took the cup and drank it off. Before he could lower the gold cup from his lips, he fell head over heels upon the carpet at the girl's feet.

Hearing the fall, Aladdin uttered a cry of triumph and, leaping from the cupboard, ran towards the motionless body of his enemy. Opening the top of the old man's robe with trembling fingers, he drew forth the lamp. "Leave me again, Badruldur," he said, "for it is time that we draw towards an end." When his wife had retired, he rubbed the lamp and, as soon as the Ifrit appeared, bade him return the palace to China, gently and without shock. Two very slight tremblings followed, one of the uplifting and one of the setting down; and lo, the palace was back in its old place in face of the sultan's dwelling!

Aladdin found Badruldur and kissed her upon the lips, saying: "We have come home, my love; but it is night and we cannot see your father until the morrow. Let us rejoice together alone, as we have done before." As neither had eaten for many hours, they sat down together in the hall of ninety-nine windows and were served with a repast of succulent meats and clear wines. Then they passed the rest of the night in the unimaginable joy of each other's arms, until the morning.

At dawn the sultan rose to weep for his daughter in that place where her dwelling had been; when he took his first sad look and saw Aladdin's palace shining in its gardens under the morning sun, he started back with a cry and rubbed his eyes, for he supposed that he beheld a mirage, or some unsubstantial picture of his grieving brain. But the towers and terraces

remained solid and unshaken; so the king began to run, forgetting all his dignity, shouting for joy and hustling the guards and porters out of his way. In spite of his great age, he leapt up the alabaster stairs of Aladdin's palace and threw himself into the hall where Aladdin and Badrulbudur waited his coming with smiles. They rose in his honour and ran towards him; he caught his daughter in his arms and the two mingled their tears of gratitude together.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-seventy-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"BUT YOU LOOK happy and in good health, my child!" exclaimed the old king, when he could get his breath, "Yet you must have known great grief and fright at being separated from your father? I should have expected to find you quite yellow. Tell me everything which has happened and hide nothing, my dear." "My colour has come back to me," answered Badrulbudur, "because I have found my father and my husband once again. But, believe me, I have wept and fasted and feared, far from this place, in the power of a Moorish magician, who wished to enjoy my body. Yet was it all my own fault, for giving away something which was not mine." She told the king the whole story of the flight of the palace and showed him the motionless body of the sorcerer lying behind a curtain. "That, O king of time," cried Aladdin, "is the cause of all our woe and my disgrace. But Allah shall punish him!"

The sultan became convinced of Aladdin's innocence and kissed him tenderly, taking him to his bosom. "Dear son," he said, "you must not blame me too much for my harshness, since my justification was my great love for Badrulbudur, which you, of all people, should appreciate. A father's heart is full of tenderness; and I would rather lose my kingdom than one hair from my daughter's little head." "You had every excuse, my father," answered Aladdin, "You supposed that you had lost your daughter through my fault; and, to a certain extent, it was so. I ought to have foreseen the magician's vile design and been on my guard against it. You will never know the full extent of his perfidy until I have leisure to tell you the whole story of my life." The sultan kissed Aladdin again and answered: "Certainly, at some future time, you must find occasion to tell me all; but it is more important now to get rid of that evil body at our feet." Aladdin ordered his young slaves to take out the body of the Moor and burn it on a bed of dung in the city square, and to cast the ashes into the public cesspool. These things were done in sight of the whole city, whose people rejoiced at this well-merited punishment and at Aladdin's restoration in the graces of the king.

The sultan announced by heralds, with a sound of pipes and drums, that he freed all who had been cast into prison, as a sign of public rejoicing; he gave large alms to the poor, and had both palaces, as well as the whole city, lighted with coloured fires at night. Thus Aladdin escaped death a second time, thanks to the grace which was in him. And you will see that same grace save him a third time, if you listen further to my tale.

Some months after Aladdin's return—months dur-

ing which he and his wife had lived in perfect happiness under the tender and vigilant eye of Aladdin's mother, who had now become a great lady, but without arrogance—his wife entered the crystal hall from which he was looking out upon the garden, and said sadly to him: "Dear master, though Allah has showered His favours upon us, He has denied me the consolation of a child. We have been married a long time and I have felt no life stirring within me. I beg you therefore to let me call to the palace an aged female saint, named Fatmah, who has just arrived in our city and is said to cure sterility by the laying on of hands."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-seventy-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ALADDIN AT ONCE gave his permission and sent four eunuchs to fetch the old saint to the palace. They soon returned leading the holy dame, her face muffled in a thick veil and a triple chaplet of mighty beads swinging over her bosom. She walked by the aid of a large stick, for her body was broken by age and virtuous practices. The princess ran to meet her and asked for her blessing, kissing her withered hand the while. In a low deep voice the old woman called down the blessings of Allah and made a long prayer for the continued prosperity of her hostess. Badrulbudur begged her to be seated in the place of honour on the couch, and said: "O saint of God, I thank you for

your prayers. As I know that He will refuse you nothing, I hope, through your intervention, to satisfy the dearest want of my soul." Then Badrulbudur blushed and continued in a smaller voice: "Saint of God, I desire that He of His mercy will grant me a child. Tell me what I must do to merit that favour, for I am ready to accomplish anything to earn a gift which would be sweeter than life itself. If you are successful in your prayers, I will give you all which you may desire, not for yourself, since you are beyond all earthly needs, but for the poor in whom you take most virtuous delight."

As Princess Badrulbudur spoke her wish, the saint's eyes, which had been lowered till then, opened and shone with a dire light. Her face seemed on fire within and her whole body shook from jubilation; she looked at the princess without speaking a word and then, stretching out her hands, laid them upon the supplicant's head and seemed to mutter a silent prayer. "My daughter, my dear mistress," she said at last, "the saints of Allah have shown me the way by which you may lure the fecundity of nature to your body; but I think you will find that way impossible." Badrulbudur threw herself at the old woman's feet, clasping her knees and crying: "Tell me the means, my mother, for nothing is impossible to Aladdin, my dear husband. Speak, or I shall die here at your feet." The saint lifted her finger and spoke: "If you would bear a child, you must hang in the crystal dome of this hall an egg taken from the bird Roc, who lives on the highest peak of the Caucasus. If you look long at this egg for many days, your interior nature will undergo modification and the dead shall live. That is all I have to say, my daughter." "I know nothing of the Roc, my mother, and I have never seen

her eggs," cried Badrulbudur, "but I am quite sure that Aladdin can instantly procure me one of these prolific marvels, even from the highest nest upon Mount Caucasus." She would have kept the saint, but the latter said to her: "I must now depart to relieve the misfortunes of others and griefs greater than your own. But tomorrow, if Allah wills, I shall return most eagerly for news of you." Then, in spite of the princess's gratitude which would have loaded her with jewels, she departed in all haste.

Soon after she had gone, Aladdin returned and came to kiss his wife, as he always did even after the shortest absence; finding her preoccupied and anxious, he asked her the cause in some alarm.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-seventy-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

BADRULBUDUR ANSWERED breathlessly: "I shall die if you do not quickly get me a Roc's egg from the highest peak of Mount Caucasus." Aladdin laughed as he answered: "Dearest, if it only requires that to keep you alive, I think that you need have no anxiety. But tell me what you will do with the egg when you have got it." "The holy old woman has prescribed that I shall look long upon it, as a cure for my sterility," replied Badrulbudur, "I wish to hang it in the middle of the crystal dome in the hall of windows." "You shall have the thing at once, my dear, I promise you that," said Aladdin.

Leaving his wife, he retired to his own chamber and drew forth the magic lamp which he now kept ever in his bosom. When the Ifrit appeared in answer to his rubbing, Aladdin addressed him in friendly fashion: "O excellent Ifrit, O obliging slave of the lamp, I wish you to bring me at once an egg of the gigantic Roc, who lives on the highest peak of Caucasus, that I may hang it in my crystal dome."

As these words left Aladdin's lips, the Ifrit twisted his whole body in a horrible fashion, his eyes blazed and he yelled so terribly in Aladdin's face that the palace shook to its foundations and the emir himself was driven like a stone from a sling, against the opposite wall. "Miserable human," cried the Jinni in a thunderous voice, "what is this that you dare to ask? O vile and most ungrateful master, have you the effrontery to demand this thing, after all that I have done for you? You would have me bring you the offspring of my supreme master, the most holy Roc, to hang in your miserable crystal dome? Mad fool, do you not know that I and the lamp and all who serve the lamp are the great Roc's slaves, vowed in obedience to the Father of Eggs? It is well for you that you are safeguarded by the lamp and carry that ring of security upon your finger; otherwise I would grind you to powder beneath your palace!" In shocked surprise, Aladdin answered: "O Ifrit of the lamp, as Allah lives, this demand does not come from me; it comes, through my wife Badruldur, from a most holy saint, a true mother of fecundity, whose cure of the barren is the surprise of time." The Ifrit suddenly grew calm and resumed his ordinary voice. "I did not know that," he said, "So matters stand thus: the crime is not yours but that vile creature's! O Aladdin, you are lucky that the suggestion was not

yours; for it would have led infallibly to the destruction of yourself and of your wife and of your palace. That was your holy old woman's object; she is no more a holy old woman than I am, but a man disguised, the brother of the Moorish sorcerer. He resembles your dead enemy as one half of a bean is like the other. True is the proverb which says: *The younger dog is fouler than his elder, for the race of dogs ever declines*. Your new foe is more adept in magic and deeper in crime than his elder brother; when he learnt through geomancy that his brother had been destroyed by you and burnt by order of the sultan, he vowed vengeance and came hither from Morocco, in the garb of an old holy woman. He succeeded in gaining introduction to the palace and then suggested the terrible crime against my supreme master. But now that I have put you on your guard, you should be able to cope with his wiles. The blessing of Allah be upon you!" So saying, the Ifrit disappeared.

Inwardly raging, Aladdin returned to his wife in the hall of windows, and said to her: "O Badrulbudur, light of my eyes, before I can obtain that egg for you, I must hear the old woman describe the remedy with my own ears. Therefore recall her and, while I hide behind the curtain, make her repeat her suggestion, on the pretext that you have forgotten exactly how it ran." "Be it upon my head and before my eyes!" answered Badrulbudur, and she sent in haste for the old woman.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-Seventy-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SOON THE PRETENDED saint, still muffled in her veil, entered beneath the crystal vault and approached Badrulbudur, but Aladdin bounded upon her from his hiding place, sword in hand, and, before she could say: "Bem!" severed her head from her body with one blow.

"O what a woeful crime, Aladdin!" cried Badrulbudur in terror; but her husband smiled and, lifting up the severed head by its topknot, showed it to the princess. To her horror and amazement she saw that it was shaved like a man's, save for the topknot, and that the face was covered with extravagant hair. In order not to keep her in suspense, Aladdin at once told his wife the truth concerning this Fatmah who was neither saint nor woman. "O Badrulbudur," he cried at length, "let us give thanks to Allah who has delivered us from our enemies for ever!" They threw themselves into each other's arms, murmuring their gratitude to the Merciful for all His favours.

After that, they lived happily for many years in company with Aladdin's mother, that good old woman, and the aged sultan, who was Badrulbudur's father; and had many children, each as beautiful as the moon. When the sultan died, Aladdin inherited the throne of China, and nothing marred their contentment until they, in their turn, were visited by the Destroyer of delights and Separator of friends.

THE PARABLE OF
TRUE LEARNING

AND SHAHRAZADE SAID TO KING SHAHRYAR:

"THAT, O AUSPICIOUS king, is all I know concerning Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp. But Allah knows all!" "The story is admirable, Shahrazade," answered King Shahryar, "but I admit that it astonished me by its discretion." Then said Shahrazade: "In that case, O King, allow me to tell you the tale of Kamar and the expert Halima." "Do so, Shahrazade," cried the king; but she smiled as she replied: "But, even before that, I wish to tell you a precept, which our fathers have handed down, concerning The True Learning, that it may teach you the admirable virtue of patience and fortify you to wait, without anger against your slave, the happy fulfilment of that destiny which Allah means to your race through me." "Let me hear this precept without delay," said Shahryar, "and also tell me what destiny Allah can mean to my race through you, when I have no posterity." "O king," murmured Shahrazade, "allow your slave to keep a still tongue yet awhile concerning the mystery of those twenty silent nights in which your benevolence allowed her to repose because she was ill and during which the splendour of your destiny was revealed to her." Then, without another hint, Shahrazade, the wazir's daughter, said:

IT IS RELATED that a handsome and studious young man once lived in a certain city, where every branch

of knowledge was freely taught. He had a great desire to be for ever learning something fresh, that his life might lack no happiness. One day, a traveling merchant told him that there existed, in a far country, a sage who was the holiest man of Islam and who, though wiser than the sum of all others at that time, practised the simple trade of a blacksmith, as his father and grandfather had done before him. Straightway the young man took his sandals, his food-bag, and his stick, and journeyed towards that far country, hoping that he might learn a little of the blacksmith's wisdom. After forty days and forty nights of danger and fatigue, he came to the city which he sought, and was directed to the smith's shop. He kissed the hem of the saint's robe and then stood before him in silence. "What do you desire, my son?" asked the smith, who was an old man with a benign face. "Learning," answered the youth. Without a word the smith put the cord of the bellows into his hand and bade him pull it. The new disciple pulled the cord of the bellows until sunset. On the morrow he did the same thing; for weeks, for months, and finally for a whole year, he worked the bellows, without receiving a word from the master or the many disciples who were engaged in various kinds of the like hard and simple toil. Five years passed before the young man dared to open his lips, and say: "Master!" The smith paused in his work and the other disciples ceased their occupations to look on anxiously. The master turned to the young man in the silence of the forge, and asked: "What do you wish?" "Learning," answered the youth; and the smith said, as he turned back to the fire: "Pull the cord." Another five years passed, during which the disciple pulled the cord of the bellows from morning to night, without

rest and without having a word addressed to him. When any of the disciples needed guidance, he was allowed to write his question on paper and hand it to the master when he entered the forge in the morning. The smith, who never read these writings, sometimes threw them into the fire and sometimes placed them in the folds of his turban. By throwing the question into the fire he showed that it was not worth an answer; but, if he placed it in his turban, the disciple would find an answer in the evening, written in gold characters upon the wall of his cell.

When the ten years were over, the old smith approached the young man and touched him on the shoulder; then the youth left hold of the cord for the first time in ten years, and a great joy descended upon him: "My son," said the master, "you may now return to your own country, knowing that you carry the whole learning of the world about with you. You have acquired patience."

He gave his disciple the kiss of peace, and the young man returned to his own country, as one inspired with light, one who sees clearly.

"That is an admirable parable!" cried King Shahryar, "It inclines me to thought." He reflected for a minute, and then added: "Now, O Shahrazade, tell me the tale of Kamar and the expert Halima." But Shahrazade said: "Let me postpone that story yet again, O king; for tonight I do not feel inclined for it; I would rather begin the purest, freshest, pleasantest tale of all I know." "Certainly, Shahrazade," said the king, "my spirit is also turned towards such things tonight. Also, by waiting for the other tale, I shall learn to profit by your parable." So Shahrazade said:

FARIZADE OF THE
ROSE'S SMILE

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious king, that there was once, in the days of long ago, a king of Persia named Khosru Shah—but Allah knows all—whom the Giver had dowered with power, beauty, and youth, and above all with so just a heart that, during his reign, the tiger and the kid walked side by side and drank together from the same stream. This king delighted to see for himself what passed in his capital city and used to walk about at night, disguised as a foreign merchant, accompanied by his wazir or some other dignitary of the palace.

One night, as he wandered through the poorest quarter of the city and was passing the mouth of a little court, he heard young voices talking from the end of it. Entering with his companion, he perceived that the voices came from a very small and humble house; so he placed his eye to a crack in the door and looked within. He saw three young girls chatting together, seated about the light upon a mat which bore the remnants of their evening meal. These girls, who were as like as sisters, were entirely beautiful; but the youngest was visibly fairer than the other two.

The eldest said: "As we are talking of wishes, my wish is to marry the sultan's pastrycook. You know how I love pastries and especially those admirably delicate and delicious leaved cakes which are called Sultan Cakes. Only the king's pastrycook can make them. I am sure, dear sisters, that you would be whole-heartedly jealous of me when you saw how a diet of fine pastry could round out my white curves and delicately calm the colour of my cheeks."

The second said: "I am not so ambitious; I would be content to marry the sultan's cook. How I should love to do so! I could satisfy all my repressed desires for those rich and extraordinary meats which are only served at the palace; especially those baked stuffed cucumbers, which trouble my heart when I only see them carried on the heads of porters during the king's feast days! How I would eat! And, if my husband allowed me, I would bring you some of those cucumbers from time to time, but I fear that he would not allow me."

The two sisters who had already expressed their wishes turned to the third who kept silence, and asked jestingly: "What is your wish, little one? Why do you lower your eyes and not speak? Do not be anxious, for, when we are married, we promise to arrange a wedding for you with one of the royal grooms, so that you may be ever near us. Is that your wish?"

The youngest blushed, and answered in a voice as pleasant as running water: "O my sisters!" As she spoke no more, the other two laughed and goaded at her until she decided to tell all, and said, without raising her eyes: "My wish is to marry our master, the sultan. I would give him fair posterity. Our sons should be worthy of their father, and our daughter would be a smile of the sky, and I should love her; her hair would be silver and gold; her tears, if she wept, would be falling pearls; her laughter, if she laughed, would be gold coins; and if she smiled, her smiles would be buds of rose glowing upon her lips."

Khosru Shah and his wazir saw and heard these things, but at this point they retired, fearing to be discovered. The sultan felt a desire to satisfy these

three wishes growing among the laughter of his heart, so he bade his companion mark down the house, that he might fetch the three girls on the morrow into the royal presence. Next morning the wazir executed this order and brought the three sisters before the throne.

At a sign from the king's head, the three came nearer, trembling, and the sultan smiled good-naturedly upon them, as he said: "Peace be with you, O young girls! Today is the day of your destiny, when the wishes of your heart shall be accomplished. And I know what those wishes are, O young girls; for nothing is hidden from the kings of the world. O eldest, you shall marry our pastrycook today; and you, O second sister, shall marry our cook." Then the king paused and turned to the third sister, whose heart beat so violently that she was like to sink to the carpet. He raised her up and made her sit on the bed of the throne. "You are my queen," he said, "and this palace is your palace."

The three weddings took place that day, the queen's in unprecedented splendour and that of the other girls with the ordinary usages which befitted their husbands' rank. Thus spite and jealousy entered the hearts of the two older sisters; and even so soon they began to plot the downfall of their youngest. Yet they were careful not to let their feelings show, and accepted with feigned gratitude the marks of affection and unusual liberties of intimacy which their sister heaped upon them in spite of their low degree. Far from being satisfied with the realisation of their wishes, they were tortured with hate and envy for the good fortune of the queen.

After nine months, Allah allowed the sultana to give birth to a princely boy, as fair as the crescent

of the new moon. Because she requested it, her two sisters were her midwives; but, instead of being touched by her favour and the beauty of the child, they found in this birth an occasion to break the heart of their sister. While the mother was still in her pains, they took the child and set it aside in a basket of osiers, substituting for it a little dead dog, which they showed to the women of the palace as the fruit of the queen's labour. Khosru Shah saw the world darken before his eyes when he heard this thing, and he shut himself away, refusing all care for the kingdom. But the sultana's grief was greater, her soul was humbled and her heart was racked by grief.

The two aunts set the basket of the newborn child afloat on the running water of a canal which washed the foot of the palace; but Destiny had decreed that the sultan's chief gardener should see the basket floating by, as he walked on the side of the canal. Guiding it ashore with a spade, he looked within and saw the handsome infant. You may be sure that his astonishment was as great as that of Pharaoh's daughter when she found Moses among the reeds.

This chief gardener had been married for many years and, though he and his wife ardently desired children, none had been vouchsafed by the Almighty. Therefore the two had lived sadly in the isolation of the barren. Thus it was that, when the gardener discovered the perfect child, he took it up in the basket and ran joyfully to his own house at the further end of the king's gardens. "Peace be upon you, O daughter of my uncle!" he cried in a broken voice to his wife, "See what the Generous has sent us upon a blessed day! This child, who is the child of Destiny, shall be our child also." He told his wife of the manner in which Allah had answered their constant prayers,

and she took the child and loved it. Glory be to Allah who has planted the seed of motherhood in the breasts of barren women, as He has given to lonely hens the instinct to cover pebbles when they have no eggs!

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-seventy-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IN THE FOLLOWING year the bereaved queen again gave birth to a son, and he was fairer if possible than the first; but the hatred of the two sisters was not abated and they played the same pitiless trick upon their sister, setting adrift the second baby on the canal and showing a young cat to the palace as the fruit of the queen's labour. Consternation took hold of every heart, and the sultan's shame was so great that he might have given himself up to fury, if the virtues of humility and justice had not been so deeply implanted in his soul. The queen was drowned in bitterness and her heart wept.

Allah, who watches over little children, caused the basket of the second son to swim into the chief gardener's view, so that he was saved from the water and taken up and adopted as his brother had been.

And, that all might be fulfilled, He quickened the sultana a third time, and she gave birth to a princess; but the jealousy of the two elder sisters had increased by this time, and they were determined to compass the queen's final destruction by abandoning the little girl

in the same way. However she was saved by the large-hearted gardener, even as her two brothers had been, and cared for and nourished and loved by the same foster parents.

This time the two sisters produced a little blind mouse as the new offspring, and the sultan, in spite of his sense of justice, could contain his fury no longer. "Allah has cursed my race because of this woman!" he cried, "I have taken a monster to be the mother of my children. Only death can assoil my dwelling from such a taint!" He pronounced the sentence of death against his queen and bade his executioner be present; but when he saw her dear form, which he had loved, standing before him drowned in tears, he felt great pity and, turning aside his head, bade the woman be shut for the rest of her days in a closet in the depths of the palace. There she stayed with her tears, a prey to all the sorrows of the world.

But her two sisters knew the great joy of a satisfied hatred, and were able to stuff themselves without bitterness with the dishes of their husbands' confecting.

The days and the years pass as swiftly over the heads of the innocent as over the heads of the guilty, bearing at an equal rate a destiny to all. The gardener's three adopted children grew to so exquisite a youth, that the eyes of all were startled at beholding them. The eldest was called Farid, the second Faruz, and the third Farizade.

Farizade was a smile of the sky, her hair was silver and gold; her tears, when she wept, were falling pearls; her laughter, when she laughed, was gold coins; and, when she smiled, her smiles were buds of rose glowing upon her lips. Her father, her mother, and her brothers, when they called her by name:

“Farizade!” could not help adding: “Rose-Smile.” But more often they called her simply Rose-Smile. Folk marvelled at her beauty, wisdom, and sweetness; and at her strength when she rode out to hunt with her brothers, or shot with the bow in their company, or hurled the javelin; they marvelled at the elegance of her manners, her knowledge of poetry and occult science, and the splendour of her hair, which was silver and gold. Her mother’s friends wept with emotion to look upon her.

While his adopted children had grown up about him, the king’s gardener had passed, amid their loving respect and cheered by their great beauty, into the confines of extreme old age. But his wife went before him into the mercy of Allah, and this death was so great a grief to the small family that the gardener resolved to stay no more in that house, where the dead woman had been the serene source of all their happiness. He threw himself at the sultan’s feet and begged to be relieved of that office which he had borne for so many years, and the king regretfully gave him leave to depart. But he would not let him go, until he had given him a magnificent dwelling near the city, with great policies of arable land, woods and fields, and having—in the midst of a perfect garden, laid out by the old man himself, and a vast park stretching between high walls, peopled with coloured birds and beasts, wild and tame—a palace richly furnished after the old man’s heart.

The good old gardener lived pleasantly for some time in this retreat, surrounded by the affectionate care of the three children, and then passed into the peace of our Lord. He was wept as a real father has seldom been wept; and, moreover, he carried with him, beneath that stone which is never lifted, the little

which he knew concerning the birth of Farid, Faruz, and Farizade.

The brothers lived with their sister in this dominion of natural beauty, and had no other dream or ambition; for they had been taught with wisdom and simplicity.

The two boys would often go hunting in far woods and fields, while Farizade of the Rose's Smile preferred to wander in the gardens. One day, as she was about to visit them, her slave informed her that an old woman was at the gate, marked with every sign of benediction, who solicited permission to repose for an hour or two in the shade of the wonderful trees. Farizade, whose heart was as compassionate as her body and soul were beautiful, received the old woman in person and fed her from a porcelain dish of fruit, pastry, and both dry and wet conserve. Then she led her through the gardens; for she had learnt that it is always profitable to listen to the words of those to whom years have brought experience.

Rose-Smile sustained the tottering feet of her guest through the alleys and at last sat down beside her in the shade of the most handsome tree which the garden held. After edifying talk of this and that, she asked the old woman what she thought of the domain, and if it pleased her.

The old woman reflected for an hour, and then answered: "Dear mistress, I have spent a long life wandering over the length and breadth of Allah's world, and I have never rested in a more delightful spot; but, just because you are unparalleled upon earth as the sun is unparalleled in heaven, I cannot help wishing that this fair garden, which holds you, held also the three incomparable things which it lacks at present." Farizade of the Rose's Smile was as-

tonished that her garden should lack three incomparable things, and said to the old woman: "I pray you tell me what those things are, good mother." "I will tell you," replied her guest, "to reward you for the loving hospitality which you have given to an old and unknown woman." She was silent for a moment, and then said:

"Dear mistress, if the first of these things were in your garden all the birds would flock together to regard it, and would sing in chorus; for the nightingales, chaffinches, larks, warblers, goldfinches and doves, together with all the infinite races of the birds, would recognise its supremacy. It is Bulbul Al-Hazar, the Talking Bird.

"If the second of these incomparable things were in your garden, the light wind would leave singing among the trees to hear it, and the lutes and harps of your home would break their cords; for the light wind singing among the trees and the lutes and the harps of your home would recognise its supremacy. It is the Singing Tree; and neither the light wind in the trees nor lutes and harps can make so musical a harmony as the thousand invisible mouths which are its leaves.

"Dear mistress, if the third incomparable thing were in your garden, the waters of your garden would cease to run murmuring, to look upon it. For the waters of land and sea, with runlets and waves, with proud rivers marching through cities and tiny brooks babbling among flowerbeds, would recognise its supremacy. It is the Gold Water. A single drop, let fall in an empty basin, will swell and jet up a birth of gold sprays, rising and falling and never overflowing. With that water, which is all gold and has the transparency of the topaz, Bulbul Al-Hazar, the Talking

Bird, quenches his thirst; and by that water, gold and topaz cool, the thousand mouths of the singing leaves of the tree are slaked.

"O my mistress, O princess, if these three marvellous things were in your garden, your beauty would be exalted, O child of shining hair."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-seventy-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"ALL THIS is admirable, visage of blessing, my mother," cried Farizade of the Rose's Smile, "but you have not told me where these three incomparable things are to be found." The old woman answered, as she rose to depart: "Dear mistress, these three marvels, which are worthy of your eyes alone, lie in a place near the frontiers of India, and the road to them leads behind this palace. If you ever send anyone to look for them, tell him to follow the road for twenty days and on the twentieth day to say to the first man whom he meets: 'Where are the Talking Bird, the Singing Tree, and the Gold Water?' The stranger will answer with the necessary directions. Now may Allah reward the generosity of your soul with all things which have been created for beauty! His blessing be upon you, O blessed!"

Murmuring further benedictions, the old woman wrapped her draperies about her, and retired. When she had gone, Farizade came out of the dream which her words occasioned and would have run after her

to ask more precise directions; then, seeing that it was too late, she repeated over and over again the few instructions which she had obtained, so that she might not forget them. Though she tried not to think of the three marvels, she felt an irresistible desire rising in her soul to possess them, or see them at the least. She walked in the alleys of her garden and visited the familiar nooks of it; but all was without charm for her and full of weariness; she found importunate the voices of the birds who gave her greeting as she wandered.

Farizade became sad and wept among the alleys; her tears as they fell left a trail of pearls behind her on the sand of the paths.

Soon Farid and Faruz returned from hunting and, not finding their sister Farizade under the jasmin bower where she usually waited their return, were grieved at her negligence and went to look for her. Almost at once they found the pearls of her tears lying upon the sand of the alleys, and said to each other: "Our sister is sad. What can have troubled her soul to make her weep?" They followed the trail of pearls and presently found her crying in a thicket. They ran towards her and kissed her; they petted her, saying: "Little Farizade, where are the roses of your joy and the gold of your gaiety? Answer us, O sister." Farizade smiled faintly, because she loved them, and a very little rose was born, crimson, upon her lips. "O my brothers," she said; and then fell silent, because she was ashamed of her first desire. "What is this unknown trouble, O Rose-Smile?" they asked, "Trust in our love and tell us of your grief." So Farizade decided to tell, and said: "I do not love my garden." Then she wept, and the pearls fell from her eyes upon the grass. "I do not love my garden

any more," she said again, as they waited in anxious silence, "There is no Talking Bird, no Singing Tree, and no Gold Water in it."

Swayed by the intensity of her desire, Farizade told her brothers excitedly of the good old woman's visit and of the excellence of the Talking Bird, the Singing Tree, and the Gold Water. Her brothers were astonished, and said to her: "Calm your eyes and refresh your dear soul, my sister; even were these things upon the inaccessible peak of Kaf, we would bring them to you. Tell us where they are to be found, so that our search may be easier." Blushing again because she had expressed her first desire, Farizade told them what the old woman had said of the way. "That is all I know of it," she added; but they cried together: "We will set forth at once, dear sister." Yet she entreated them in alarm: "No, no; do not go, my brothers." Then said Farid, the eldest: "Your desire is upon our head and before our eyes, O Farizade. But it is for the eldest to fulfil it. My horse is still saddled and will carry me to the frontiers of India without flagging." Then, to his brother Faruz, he continued: "You must stay here to watch over our sister; she must not be left alone in the house." He leapt into the saddle and bent down to kiss his brother and sister. "Dismount, dear brother!" cried Farizade, "Give up this journey, for it may be full of danger. Rather than suffer your absence, I wish never to see the Talking Bird, the Singing Tree, and the Gold Water." But Farid kissed her again, saying: "Little sister, have no fear for me; my absence will not be long and I am sure that Allah means me no harm by the way. See, I give you this knife, whose hilt is crusted with the pearls of the first tears you ever shed. It will keep you informed of my condition.

Examine the blade from time to time; as long as it stays clean and bright, you will know that I am well and fortunate; but if it shows dull or rusty, I shall have met with some accident or been thrown into captivity; if it becomes spotted with blood you may be certain that I have ceased to live. Should that last happen, I beg the two of you to call down the compassion of Allah upon me." He handed the knife to his sister and galloped off, without waiting for a reply, along the road which led to India.

He rode for twenty days and twenty nights, through solitudes filled only with green grass and the presence of God; and on the twentieth day came to a meadowland at the foot of a mountain. In this meadowland there was a tree and beneath the tree a very old man was seated. His face was hidden entirely by the long hair of his head, by unkempt tufts of his eyebrows, and by a prodigious beard, as white as new-carded wool. His arms and legs were very thin, and his hands and feet were tipped with nails of extraordinary length. With his left hand he told a chaplet of beads, while he held his right immovable at the height of his brow with the index finger raised, to attest the unity of Allah. There can be no doubt that he was an old ascetic who had left the world for unknown years and years.

As this was the first stranger whom Farid had encountered on the twentieth day, he dismounted and advanced towards him, saying: "Greeting, O holy man!" The sheikh answered his greeting, but his voice was so muffled by the thick moustache and beard that Farid could not recognise the words he said.

"I must make him hear," said Farid to himself, for he had but halted to enquire his way. Taking a pair of scissors from his haversack, he said: "Ven-

erable uncle, allow me to give you some few attentions which your ceaseless preoccupation in saintly thought has prevented you from accomplishing yourself." As the old man said neither yes nor no, the prince set himself to cut and trim the mighty beard, the moustaches, brows, and hair, and finally the nails, until the snipping and paring had shorn away twenty years at least. Then, as barbers do, he said: "May it be a refreshment and delight!"

When the old man felt himself lightened from all this encumbrance, he was extremely satisfied, and said to the traveller, with a benign smile and in a voice as clear as a child's: "May Allah shower his blessings upon you, my son, for the courteous attentions which you have paid to a very old man. And I, myself, O traveller of good omen, am ready to help you with my counsels and experience." "I have come from far off, to find the Talking Bird, the Singing Tree, and the Gold Water," answered Farid, "Can you tell me in what place I must look for them?"

The old man suddenly ceased to tell his beads, but he did not answer; so Farid asked again: "Why do you not speak, good uncle? I do not wish to allow my horse to grow cold, if you do not know." "I know the place, my son, and the road which leads to it," replied the old man at length, "but the favour which you have done me is so great that I cannot make up my mind to expose you to the terrible dangers of such an enterprise. Turn back, my son, and ride to your own place; for many and many a young man has passed this way before you and not one has ever returned." "Only show me the way," said Farid proudly, "and do not trouble yourself about the rest; for Allah has given me a strong arm." "How will a strong arm defend you against the Invisible," de-

manded the old man slowly, "especially when Those of the Invisible are numbered in thousands upon thousands?" "There is no power or might save in Allah, O sheikh!" exclaimed Farid, "My destiny is about my neck; if I turn from it, it will follow me. Only tell me what I must do, and I will be eternally obliged."

When the Old Man of the Tree saw that he could not dissuade this young adventurer, he put his hand in a bag which hung about his waist and drew from it a ball of red granite. This he handed to Farid, saying . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-seventy-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"MOUNT YOUR HORSE and throw this ball in front of you; it will roll ahead and guide you. When it stops, dismount and fasten your horse's bridle to the ball; then the animal will wait your return, without moving from that place. Climb on foot up that mountain whose summit we can see from here. You will behold great black stones on every side and you will hear voices which are not of the torrents, not of the winds in the abysses, for they belong to Those of the Invisible. They will shout terrible words at you, enough to freeze the blood of man, but you must not listen; for, if you look behind you while they call from near and far, you will be changed to a black stone like the others. If you can resist their calling and come to the

top of the mountain, you will find a cage there with the Talking Bird inside it. You must say: 'Greeting, O Bulbul Al-Hazar! Where is the Singing Tree? Where is the Gold Water?' And the Talking Bird will answer. And Allah have you in His keeping!"

The old man sighed and fell silent; as he spoke no more, Farid leapt into the saddle and threw the ball in front of him with all his force. The round red granite rolled and rolled and rolled before; and Farid's horse, which was as a stream of light among other horses, could hardly follow it through the briars it broke, the hollows it leapt, and the little hills it overcame. It did not slacken its pace until it came among the first rocks of the mountain; but there it stopped suddenly. Prince Farid dismounted, and twisted the bridle of his horse about the granite ball; at once the creature grew still upon its four legs, as if it had been nailed to the ground.

At first Farid heard nothing as he began to climb the mountain, and only saw about him as he went masses of black basalt shaped like human bodies. Though he did not know it, these were the bodies of the young lords who had gone before him into that desolate place. Suddenly a cry rose among the rocks, such as he had never heard before, and two other cries followed it, to right and left, which could not have issued from a man's throat. Nor were they the howlings of savage winds among the rocks, nor the moaning of waters of the torrent, nor the sound of cataracts hurling themselves into a measureless abyss; for they were the voices of Those of the Invisible. Some said: "What do you want? What do you want?" Some said: "Stop him; kill him! Stop him; kill him!" Some said: "Throw him down! Throw him down!" And some said: "He is charming! He

is charming! Come to us! Come to us!" and seemed to laugh.

Prince Farid went on climbing bravely, without turning his head; but soon the voices became so numerous and terrible, sometimes bellowing and touching his face with their breath, sometimes far off and far behind, sometimes so menacing, and sometimes so seductive, that at last the poor boy trembled in spite of himself and, forgetting the advice of the Old Man of the Tree, turned his head in the direction of a more frightful cry which breathed upon his face. At once the voices rose to a single laughing yell of triumph and then fell awfully silent, as Prince Farid changed where he stood into a block of black basalt.

And his horse, also, was turned to a formless black rock at the foot of the mountain; and the ball of red granite rolled back towards the Old Man's Tree.

When Princess Farizade made her examination of the knife on that day, she turned pale and trembled, because the bright blade had become dull and rusted. Faruz ran up to help her and she lapsed into his arms, crying: "Farid, Farid, where are you? Why did I let you go? I am unhappy. O wicked Farizade, I will never love you more!" She sobbed as if her heart would break, and Prince Faruz, though he was no less afflicted, set himself to console her. "What has happened was fated to happen," he said, "Now I will set out to find our brother, and also bring you back the three things which you desire." "Do not go for my silly wishes," begged Farizade, "If misfortune befell you also, I should die." But her tears could not turn the second brother from his resolution. He mounted his horse and, after kissing his sister farewell, gave her a chaplet of pearls made from the second tears which

she had wept as a child. "If these pearls seem to be stuck together and will not run through your fingers," said he, "you may know that I have met the same fate as my brother." Farizade embraced him sadly, sighing: "God grant that does not happen, dearest! May he send you both back to me in safety." So Prince Faruz took the road which led to India.

On the twentieth day of his riding, he found the Old Man of the Tree sitting, as Farid had seen him, with the index finger of his right hand held on a level with his brow. After greeting, the sheikh informed the prince of his brother's passing and made every effort of eloquence to turn him back. Then, seeing that he could not shake his resolve, he gave him the ball of red granite, which led him to the foot of the fatal mountain.

As Prince Faruz climbed courageously, the voices rose about his steps; but he would not listen to them. Menaces, curses, and flattering calls had no effect on him; but a sudden desolate cry of "Brother, dear brother, do not pass me!" made him turn his head, and he was at once turned into black basalt.

Farizade ceased not day and night from telling the pearls and when, on the twentieth day, they no longer obeyed her fingers but seemed stuck together, she cried: "O poor devoted brothers, lost through my caprice, I come, I come!" She fought down her sorrow and would waste no moment in lamentation; she disguised herself as a man and set out on horseback upon the same road, armed from head to heel.

On the twentieth day, she came upon the Old Man sitting under his Tree beside the road, and saluted him respectfully. "Saintly father," she said, "have you seen two young and handsome lords pass by, seeking the Talking Bird, the Singing Tree, and the Gold

Water?" "Sweet mistress Farizade of the Rose's Smile," answered the old man, "I both saw them and gave them direction, but I fear that Those of the Invisible have caught them, as they have caught so many others." Hearing the old man call her by her name, Farizade stood in perplexed silence, while the saint continued: "Mistress of splendour, those who spoke to you of the three incomparable things, so often sought upon this road by lords and princes, told you the truth; but they did not say that terrible danger hedges the undertaking with impossibility." He told the princess all that she risked in going after her brothers; but she replied: "O holy man, my soul is troubled within me, for it is a soul easily frightened; but I cannot turn back when the safety of my brothers is concerned. Hearken to the loving sister's prayer, and show me a way to deliver them." "O Farizade, O king's daughter, here is the granite ball which will lead you upon your brothers' tracks," said the sheikh after a pause, "but you will never free them until you have gained possession of the three marvels. Yet, as you do not risk your immortal soul from any desire to vanquish the impossible, but only from love of your brothers, the impossible shall become your slave. No human may resist the calling of the Invisible, but the sons of men may use guile against their strength, and come off victorious."

So saying, the Old Man of the Tree handed the red granite ball to Farizade and then took a wisp of cotton from his belt, crying: "This light wisp of cotton shall conquer the Invisible! Lean down the glory of your head, O Farizade." She bent the silver and gold glory of her head, and the old man cried again: "May the daughter of men conquer the armies of the Invisible with a wisp of cotton!" Then, divid-

ing the cotton into two parts, he put one into each of Farizade's ears, and signed to her to depart.

Farizade followed the ball, as her brothers had done, and began hardily to climb the mountain. The voices rose about her feet among the rocks of black basalt in a terrible howling, but she heard only a vague humming and, being unable to distinguish any words, felt no fright at all. Though her feet were only used to the fine sands of her garden alleys she went on unwearying and came at last to the top of the mountain. There, in a flat space, she saw a gold cage standing on a gold pedestal, holding the Talking Bird bright within it.

She ran forward and placed her hand upon the cage, crying: "I have you, bird! You shall never escape me!" At the same time she pulled the wisps of cotton from her ears and threw them far from her, for already the voices of the Invisible were still, and a silence slept upon the mountain.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-seventy eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE VOICE OF the Talking Bird rose in the breast of that silence, singing clear:

*Farizade,
Rose's smile,
Farizade,
Rose's shape,*

*Why should I,
Farizade,
Farizade,
Seek escape?*

*For I know,
Rose's smile,
Better far,
Farizade,
Farizade,
Than you know,
Farizade,
Who you are.*

*To the grave,
Farizade,
Farizade,
I am slave,
Rose's smile,
Farizade,
To the grave.*

Thus sang the Talking Bird, O lutes! Farizade forgot her weariness and said to the miracle: "O Bulbul Al-Hazar, O marvel of the air, if you are my slave, prove it to me!"

Bulbul sang this answer:

*Farizade,
You to say,
Farizade,
You to say
And for me,
Farizade,
To obey.*

Then Farizade asked where she might find the Singing Tree, and Bulbul bade her turn to the opposite slope of the mountain. There she saw a tree so great that it might have shaded a whole army, and wondered exceedingly how she should be able to unroot it and carry it away. Seeing her perplexity, Bulbul sang again that it was enough to break off the least branch of that tree and to plant it in her garden. So Farizade walked towards the Tree and listened to the singing of its leaves. Then she understood that she was in the presence of the second marvel, for neither light winds in Persian gardens, nor Indian lutes, nor Syrian harps had ever made music to be compared with the concerted singing of the thousand invisible mouths, which were the leaves of that melodious tree.

When Farizade had sufficiently recovered from her ecstasy to pluck a small branch, she returned to Bulbul and asked him where she might find the Gold Water. The Talking Bird bade her turn towards the West and look behind a blue rock which she would then see. So she turned her steps to the West and beheld a mass of tender turquoise; and a slim stream of liquid gold gushing from its azure wall upon the further side; but though the jet was gold, it was as cool and translucent as a water of topaz. With the splendid water Farizade filled a crystal urn, which stood in a niche of the blue rock, and returned to Bulbul, carrying both her prizes.

Thus Farizade of the Rose's Smile gained possession of the three incomparable things.

"O most beautiful, I have yet one more prayer to make," she said, "The goal of my setting forth has not yet been attained." The Bird invited her to say on, and she murmured in a trembling voice: "My brothers, O Bulbul, my brothers!"

For a moment Bulbul was terrified, for he had been used so long to serving Those of the Invisible; but soon he called to mind that the princess had conquered, and sang in answer:

*With the fountain, fountain, fountain,
Fountain water, fountain tinkle,
In the urn, the urn of crystal,
Farizade, Farizade,
Rise, O rose, oh, rise and sprinkle
All the black stones of the mountain,
With the fountain, with the fountain,
Farizade, Farizade.*

Farizade took the crystal urn in one hand and, holding the gold cage and the singing branch in the other, began to retrace her steps down the mountain. As she passed any black basalt rock, she would sprinkle it with water and it would take on life and change into a man. Soon her brothers were restored to her by this means and ran to embrace her, while all the other noble youths, wakened from their stony sleep, hastened to kiss her hand and declare themselves her slaves. The whole troop reached the bottom of the mountain in safety and, when Farizade had restored their horses with the Gold Water, rode off in the direction of the Old Man's Tree.

But the Old Man was not in the meadowland, and his tree had disappeared. Farizade questioned Bulbul concerning this, and he answered in a voice which had become suddenly serious: "Why do you wish to see the old man, Farizade? He gave a daughter of men the teaching of a cotton wisp, so that she overcame the importunate voices of evil, and now, as a master retires before his work, he has gone to his own place. His wisdom remains with you and the

evils which afflict the human race may not take hold of you, because you have learnt not to lend the attention of your soul to outside happenings. Outside happenings only exist because the attention of the soul is lent to them. You have learnt serenity, which is the mother of happiness."

So spake the Talking Bird in the place where the Old Man's Tree had stood, and all who heard marvelled at the depth and beauty of his language.

At first the troop kept together upon the road, forming an escort about Farizade, but soon the lords and princes branched off, one after the other, to go to their homes, and, on the evening of the twentieth day, Farid, Faruz, and Farizade arrived alone and without accident at their palace.

When they had dismounted, Farizade hung the gold cage under the jasmin arbour and, as soon as Bulbul sounded the first note of his voice, all the birds of the garden flocked together to regard him, and sang his praise in chorus. For the nightingales, chaffinches, larks, warblers, goldfinches, and doves, together with all the infinite races of the birds, recognised his supremacy. In voices high and low they sang responses among the leaves to his solitary couplets, and acclaimed each skilful trill of his in the language of their kind.

And Farizade went to the fountain basin of alabaster, in whose depths she had been used to behold the silver and gold splendour of her hair, and let fall into it one drop of water from the crystal urn. The gold bead swelled and jetted up a birth of golden sprays, rising and falling and never overflowing, and filling the sun-flecked air with the cool of a sea cave.

And with her own hands Farizade planted the Singing Branch, so that it took root and grew in

a few moments to as great and fair a tree as the one from which it came. It sang with all its leaves, and neither light winds in Persian gardens nor Indian lutes, nor Syrian harps, had ever made such music; to hear the thousand invisible mouths which were its leaves, the waters of the garden ceased to run murmuring, the birds fell silent, and the wandering breeze among the roses hushed the silken sighing of its dress.

The days of monotonous happiness began again: Farizade resumed her walks among the alleys, staying for long hours to talk with the Talking Bird, to listen to the Singing Tree, and to delight her eyes with the Gold Water; while Farid and Faruz returned to their hunting and riding in the neighbouring woods.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-seventy-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ONE DAY, as the two brothers rode out hunting, they saw the Sultan approaching by some narrow forest path in which they went, so they hastened to dismount and prostrate themselves. The king, who was surprised to see two richly dressed and unknown cavaliers so near his city, bade them rise that he might behold their faces. They rose and stood before him with an air of nobility which admirably suited their respectful mien; the king was struck by their beauty, and looked them up and down for a long while; then, as his heart was drawn towards them, he asked them where they dwelt. "O king of time," they answered, "we are the sons of your old slave,

the chief gardener, who is now dead. We dwell not far from here, in the house which you gave him." The sultan rejoiced to make the acquaintance of his faithful servant's children; but he was astonished that they had not presented themselves at the palace, and said so. "O king of time," they answered, "pray forgive us our absence from before your generous face; but we have a young sister, who was our father's latest trust to us, and we watch over her with so much love that it has never occurred to us to leave her." Touched by this answer, the sultan exclaimed: "I never thought that I had in my kingdom two youths so charmingly accomplished and so free from ambition. I will, if I may, visit your dwelling and rejoice my sight further with such a prodigy." Immediately Faruz led him forward, and Farid rode ahead to inform his sister of the king's coming.

Farizade heard the news with a certain dismay, as she was unused to receiving guests; in her perplexity she consulted her friend Bulbul, the Talking Bird. "O Bulbul," she said, "the king is about to honour our house with a visit, and we must entertain him. Teach us how to behave, that he may go upon his way content." "Dear mistress," answered Bulbul, "it will be useless for you to get the cook to prepare multitudinous dishes for the king, today a single one will serve him; a dish of cucumber stuffed with pearls." Farizade thought that the Bird's tongue had betrayed him; so she cried with a laugh: "O Bird, Bird, what are you thinking of? Cucumber stuffed with pearls, indeed! There never was such a dish. If the king honours our cloth, he will want to eat, not to swallow pearls. You meant to say: cucumbers stuffed with rice." But the Talking Bird answered

angrily: "Not at all! Not at all! Not at all! Stuffed with pearls, with pearls, with pearls! Not with rice, not with rice, not with rice!"

So Farizade, who had every confidence in her miraculous pet, bade the old cook prepare a dish of cucumbers stuffed with pearls, of which there were naturally great store in the house.

Soon Faruz led the sultan into the garden, where Farid greeted him and helped him to dismount. Farizade of the Rose's Smile, veiled for the first time in her life, on Bulbul's advice, came to kiss his hand. The king wept, for her sweet grace and the jasmin purity which exhaled from her reminded him that he was growing old without a daughter. As he blessed her, he said: "He who leaves posterity does not die! O father of these fair children, may Allah grant you a place upon His right hand in Paradise!" Then, glancing again at the bowing Farizade, he continued: "But now, I beg you, O scented stem, O daughter of my servant, lead me to some delightful thicket, where we may be shaded from the heat." So the trembling Farizade led him towards the depths of the garden, followed by her two brothers.

The first marvel which struck the eyes of Khosru Shah was the spray of gold water. He paused for a moment before it, and cried: "Marvellous gold rain, cooling the eyes!" As he would have examined it more closely, he heard the music of the Singing Tree and lent a ravished ear to it for many silent minutes. "Music of dreams!" he cried; but as he would have walked nearer to the tree, its singing ceased and a great silence fell upon the garden. The voice of the Talking Bird rose small and sweet and clear from the breast of that silence: "Welcome king, welcome king, welcome Khosru Shah! Welcome, welcome!" Then,

as the last note ceased, all the birds of the garden answered in their own tongue: "Welcome, welcome, welcome!"

Khosru Shah felt his heart made tender by astonishment, and he cried: "O house of peace! Would I might cast aside my power and live with the children of my old slave for ever!" The brothers and sister pointed out the beauties of the Singing Tree and the Talking Bird to him, and Farizade said: "The getting of these marvels is a tale which I shall tell our lord the king, when he is rested."

The sultan reposed under the jasmin arbour and there the cucumbers stuffed with pearls were served before him on a gold dish.

The king was extremely fond of stuffed cucumbers and rejoiced when he saw them; but when he found that they were filled with pearls instead of rice or nuts, he exclaimed: "Surely this is a novel way of cooking cucumbers?" Farizade was on the point of dropping the dish and fleeing in confusion, when the Talking Bird called the sultan gravely by name, and said to him: "O Khosru Shah, O Khosru Shah, since when has a queen of Persia given birth to animals? If you could believe that impossibility, O king of time, this impossibility should mean nothing to you. Dear master, do you not remember the words which were spoken in a humble dwelling one evening twenty years ago? If you have forgotten, Farizade's slave will repeat them to you."

Imitating the sweet speech of a young girl, the Bird went on: "My wish is to marry our master, the sultan. I would give him fair posterity. Our sons should be worthy of their father and our daughter would be a smile of the sky, and I should love her; her hair would be silver and gold; her tears, if she wept, would

be falling pearls, her laughter, if she laughed, would be gold coins; and, if she smiled, her smiles would be buds of rose glowing upon her lips."

The sultan hid his face in his hands and sobbed; for his old grief was even greater in the recalling than in the happening. Far thoughts flowed from their place in the depths of his soul into his heart and tore it savagely.

But Bulbul raised his voice again and this time gaily, saying: "Unveil before your father, Farizade!"

Farizade lifted her veils and her hair fell down with them, so that the sultan saw it and stretched out his arms with a happy cry. "Behold your daughter, O king!" sang Bulbul, "Surely her hair is silver and gold, and there are pearls of joy upon her lids and a young rose coming to blossom at her mouth!"

The king then looked upon the two brothers and recognised himself in them. "Behold your sons, O king!" sang out the voice of Bulbul. While Khosru Shah stayed still for very happiness, with his arms about his children, the Talking Bird told him the whole story of their birth from beginning to end. But nothing would be gained by repeating it in this place. As the tale went on, the sultan and his children mingled their tears and kisses together. Glory be to Allah, the Great, the Unfathomable, who blesses His people with reunion!

"My sweet ones," cried Khosru Shah, when they had all a little recovered from the emotion of their meeting, "let us ride in all haste to tell your mother." But we shall not try to describe the poor woman's joy when she saw, after her lonely years, the love and splendour of her children. Let us rather give thanks to Allah for that infinite justice which struck the two jealous sisters dead from rage upon that happy day;

and gave years and long delights to Khosru Shah and to his queen, and to the princes and to Farizade, until they were visited by the Separator of friends, the Destroyer. Glory be to Him who, seated among eternity, knows no change!

That is the marvellous Tale of Farizade of the Rose's Smile. But Allah knows all!

When Shahrazade made an end of this story, little Doniazade cried: "Dear sister, your words are sweet and delightful, fresh and savoury! I found the story charming." "So did I," agreed King Shahryar. Then Doniazade whispered to Shahrazade: "I think I see a tear in the king's left eye, and a second tear in his right eye." Shahrazade cast a quick look at the king, and said with a smile, as she embraced the little one: "I trust the king will be as pleased by the tale of Kamar and the expert Halima." "I have never heard that tale, Shahrazade," answered Shahryar, "and you know how eagerly I have waited for it." But Shahrazade exclaimed: "If Allah wills, and the great king allow, I shall begin it tomorrow." So Shahryar, who remembered the parable of true learning said to himself: "I must be patient until tomorrow."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-eightieth Night
Had Come*

LITTLE DONIAZADE CRIED: "O Shahrazade, in Allah's name begin the Tale of Kamar and the expert Halima!"

So Shahrazade said:

THE TALE OF KAMAR &
THE EXPERT HALIMA

IT IS RELATED that there was once in the antiquity of time—but Allah knows all!—a worthy merchant called Abd Al-Rahman whom the Giver had favoured with one son and one daughter. The daughter's name was Morning-Star, because of her perfect beauty, and, since the boy was altogether like the young moon, they called him Kamar. When they grew up from babyhood, the merchant, who saw that Allah had dowered them with dangerous charm, feared the evil eye of envy and all the wiles of corruption; so he kept the two shut up in his house until they were fourteen, and never allowed them to see anyone, except the old slave who ministered to their wants. But a day came when the merchant, contrary to his custom, seemed in a jovial and bending humour; so his wife said to him: "O father of Kamar, our son has become a man and can do as men do. Tell me now, is he a girl or is he a boy?" "A boy, surely," cried the astonished Abd Al-Rahman. "In that case," retorted his wife, "why do you keep him shut up from the eyes of the creation like a girl, instead of taking him to the market and seating him beside you in the shop? Why do you not introduce him to the world and let people know that you have a son to succeed you? I pray to Allah that your life may be long, but, when you have to die, no one will know of the existence of your heir, if you keep him imprisoned in this way. It will be all very well for him to say: 'I am the son of Abd Al-Rahman'; folk will quite justly answer: 'We never heard that Abd Al-Rahman had a son or anything like a son.' Then, woe upon our house, the government will seize your goods and cheat the boy of

his inheritance. . . . And with Morning-Star it is the same! I wish to make her known to our relations; for that might lead to a suit in marriage and we could rejoice again in her wedding as we rejoiced in our own. This world is made of life and death, O father of Kamar, and we may not know the day of Destiny."

The merchant Abd Al-Rahman reflected for an hour, and then answered: "O daughter of my uncle, it is true that no man may escape the destiny which hangs about his neck; but I only hid the children for fear of the evil eye; surely you cannot reproach me for my prudence?" "Far be all Evil!" exclaimed his wife, "Pray for the Prophet, O sheikh!" So he cried: "The blessing of Allah be upon Him and His!" and she continued: "Now put your trust in Allah, for He can safeguard our children from all ill-omen. Here is the turban of white Mosul silk which I made for Kamar; I sewed a roll of holy verses in a silver tube among its folds; therefore you need have no fear. Take Kamar with you today, show him the market and introduce him to his father's shop." Without waiting for a reply, she went to fetch young Kamar, whom she had advised to dress in his best, and led him into the presence of his father. Abd Al-Rahman rejoiced to see him, and said: "The name of Allah be upon you and about you, O Kamar!" Then, being overpersuaded by his wife, he took the boy by the hand and led him forth.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-eighty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

BUT NO SOONER had they left the threshold and ventured into the street than they were surrounded by a crowd of passengers, who halted in trouble of spirit, snared by the sweet damnation of Kamar's looks. Yet the streets were as nothing to the market; on their entrance, all who walked there immediately ceased from walking and surged about the two. Some kissed Kamar's hands, others saluted his father, and yet others cried: "O Allah, the sun has risen twice this morning! The little crescent moon of Ramadan has come again! Here is the new moon in the market!" A babel of admiration and good wishes rose about father and son, and, although Abd Al-Rahman in confusion and anger pushed and expostulated, the citizens continued to stand in close rank, feasting their eyes on beauty and calling down the blessing of Allah upon that day. Doubtless they excused themselves with these words of the poet:

*Who beauty loveth and created hath
With the same breath which bade us fear Thy wrath,
Lover and Lord, we pray Thee to remove
Either restraint or beauty from our path.*

The merchant's perplexity knew no bounds when he found his son the centre of a packed mob of men and women, all gazing at him with shining eyes. Under his breath he heaped on his wife all those curses which he would have liked to have applied more loudly to these vulgar admirers. As none of his entreaties

had any effect, he finally pushed roughly through the people and, gaining the shelter of his shop, seated Kamar so far back that passers could only see him from a distance. At once the shop became the one centre of interest in the market, and hour by hour the jostling of great and small grew heavier about it; for those who had seen wished to see again and those who had not seen most ardently desired to see.

When the spectators were in their thickest, a dervish with an ecstatic eye came towards the shop and, seeing Kamar sitting beside his father, halted with a profound sigh, and said these lines in a broken voice:

*I saw the thin branch of the ban
Where shines the moon of Ramadan
In sickle saffron glow.
"What is your name?" "Lulu," said he,
"Lulu, a pearl." Then I: "Li? Li?
Li? Li? O pearl, are you for me?"
He: "La! la! La! la! no!"*

Then the old dervish came up to the counter, stroking his long white beard, his great age making a way for him among the crowd. He looked at the boy with tear-filled eyes and offered him a branch of sweet basil; finally, he sat down quite close to him upon the front bench of the shop.

*Where, Ramadan's gold moon to fasters,
There is a slight fair one, my masters,
You may be sure to see draw near
A sheikh, snow-bearded and severe,
Who has so studied love's allure
With sinner, saint, pure and impure,
With licit and illicit*

*That he could take degrees in it,
Between caresses and the wine,
His figure shows a sharp decline,
A toothpick in a shroud is he,
But oh, a Moor for gallantry.*

*They say his int'rest is contrary,
Spurns the simple ordinary,
That only weird runes make him dance;
But such is not the circumstance.
With all who are possessed of youth,
He'll seek the principles of truth.
There are no scruples, dark and nice
That he can't solve within a trice. . .
(It is admitted, certainly,
That he's a Moor for gallantry.)*

Seeing the ecstasy of this dervish, the people drew their own conclusions, saying: "As Allah lives, all dervishes are alike! They are all knives for colocasia, making no difference between legal and illegal." And others cried: "Far be the Evil One! He burns for the illegal! Allah confound such dervishes!"

The merchant Abd Al-Rahman thought that the best way out of these difficulties would be to return home earlier than usual, so, in the hope of persuading the dervish to depart, he drew some money from his belt and held it towards him, saying: "Take today's chance, O dervish!" Then he turned to his son, and exclaimed: "My child, I trust that Allah will punish your mother according to her deserts, for she has given us a hard day!" Finally, as the dervish did not move or make any motion to take the money, he said to him: "Rise up now, uncle, for I wish to shut

the shop." He got to his feet as he spoke and began to close the two leaves of the door, so that the dervish was obliged to rise from the bench, to which he had seemed nailed, and go out into the street; yet he never took his eyes from young Kamar. Also, when the merchant and his son had shut the shop and battled their way through the crowd, he followed them out of the market and came behind them to their house, his stick beating a rhythm to their footsteps. Seeing his tenacity, and not daring to curse him, both because of the bystanders and because of his respect for religion, the merchant turned round, and asked: "What do you want, O dervish?" "O my master," the man replied, "I greatly desire to be your guest to-night; and remember that he who invites a stranger invites God." Kamar's father exclaimed as heartily as he could: "Welcome to the guest of Allah! Enter my poor house, O dervish!" But below his breath he said: "I know what he is after; if he has evil intentions towards my son and should be so unlucky as to try anything, I will kill him and bury him in the garden and spit upon his grave! But first I suppose I must give him something to eat, for he is my guest met upon the road of Allah." He led the old man into his house and bade the negress take him food and drink and water for his ablutions. The dervish invoked the name of Allah as he washed and, placing himself for prayer, recited all the Chapter of the Cow, followed it with the Chapter of the Table, and finished with the Chapter of Immunity. Then, and not till then, he invoked the Name a second time and ate with discretion and dignity.

As soon as Abd Al-Rahman learnt from the negress that the dervish had finished his repast, he determined to test the old man's intention; so he called his son,

saying: "O Kamar, go to our guest and ask him if his need is satisfied; talk with him a little, for the words of those who walk over the length and breadth of the world are pleasant to hear, and the tales they tell are profitable. Sit quite near him, and if he takes your hand do not snatch it away; those who teach often prefer to have some direct contact with their pupils, as a surer means of transmitting knowledge. In all things show him the respect due to a guest and to an old man." Then he sent his son in to the dervish and hastened to post himself at a window in the upper storey, through which he could see and hear all that went on in the hall.

As soon as the lovely youth appeared on the threshold, the holy old man was so moved that tears jetted from his eyes and he sighed as a mother sighs who has lost and found her child. Kamar went up to him and, in a voice which would have turned the bitterness of myrrh to honey, asked if he lacked for aught and had taken sufficient of Allah's blessing. Then, with a graceful movement, he sat down quite close to him and, as he sat, unintentionally exposed a thigh whiter and smoother than almond curds. Well-inspired was the poet who sang:

*All men shall rise on Resurrection Day
Up to the sky,
Or when the pearl and almond you display,
Sweet, of your thigh.*

But instead of allowing himself any kind of liberty with the charming youth, the old man retired a few paces from him and sat down again in an attitude of assured decency and self-respect. He went on looking at him in silence and shedding tears, so that Kamar

was surprised and asked if he had offended him, or if the hospitality of the house had been insufficient. For sole response the dervish recited, with great elegance and dignity, these musical lines:

*The horses of beauty have drawn up my heart,
For beauty is perfection, to a spot
High in the hills, where longing has no part
And flesh is not.*

Kamar's father saw and heard these things in great astonishment. "I offended against Allah," said he, "when I suspected this wise dervish of perverse intentions. May He confound the Tempter who lures us to have evil thoughts about our brothers!" He hastened down to the hall and greeted his guest most benevolently, saying: "I conjure you, in Allah's name, my brother, to tell me the reason of your tears and sighs when you beheld my son; for surely such an effect must have a cause." "You are right, O father of hospitality," answered the dervish. So the merchant said again: "Then will you not tell me that cause?" "Good master," replied the old man, "why should you force me to open a closed wound and turn the knife of memory within?" "I do not force you," exclaimed Abd Al-Rahman, "but I beg you to satisfy my curiosity. Has not a host the right to do so?"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-eighty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID :

THEN SAID THE OLD MAN :

I am a poor dervish who wanders for ever over Allah's world, marvelling at the work of His hand by day and night.

One Friday morning my fate led me to the city of Bassora, where I saw the markets, shops, and stalls open and filled with merchandise, loaded with food and drink and all which may be bought and sold; but no trace among any of them, or coming and going before any of them, of merchant or purchaser, woman or little girl, or dog or cat or children playing. In all the streets was but loneliness, silence, and the presence of God. I was astonished, and said within my soul: "Where can these people have gone so swiftly, leaving their goods exposed on every stall?" Then, as I was tortured by hunger, I made my way to the best furnished tray of a pastrycook and ate my fill. After that, I helped myself from the stall of a seller of roast meat and devoured two or three, or it may have been four, skewers of fat lamb, with one or two chicken hot from the oven, and a few light warm rolls such as my tongue and nose had never savoured in all my pilgrimage. Giving thanks to Allah, I next went up into the shop of a sherbert seller and drank one or two goblets of sherbert perfumed with nard and benzoin. I took only enough to remove the edge from my thirst, for my throat had long been unused to the drinks of rich citizens. Then I thanked the Beneficent once more that He has allowed to His

Believers on this earth a foretaste of the fountain Salsabil.

As soon as I had stilled the cravings of my body, I began to ponder again on the strange appearance of that city. It seemed to me that the streets could only have been abandoned a few minutes before my coming, and I was beginning to fear the echoes of my own footsteps in that solitude, when I heard the sound of approaching music. In the trouble of my mind I took this as a final proof that the city was bewitched. Certain that the music proceeded from evil spirits, I fled into a grain shop and hid myself at the back of it, behind a sack of beans; but, as I am curious by nature—Allah pardon it in me!—I placed myself in such a position that I could see all which happened in the street, without myself being seen. I had hardly made myself comfortable when I saw a shining band, which may not have been of spirits, but was certainly of Paradisal houris. Forty girls with unveiled faces, painted by moonlight, advanced in two ranks, with a movement of the feet which in itself was singing. Lute players and dancers went before, lighter and whiter than the doves of Summer, so that I could not but suppose that they were presences from many-columned Iram, or from the gardens of Allah.

The last had just passed the shop where I lay hidden, when a mare with starry front came into my view, her bridle held by two young negresses, and a woman riding upon her so dressed in beauty and youth that I lost my breath and well-nigh fainted behind my sack of beans. Her clothes were sewn with jewels, her neck and wrists and ankles were banded with them, and her hair powdered with the colour of them. Upon her right hand walked a slave, bearing a naked sword whose hilt was carved out of a single emerald.

The mare marched on in majesty, like a queen proud of the crown upon her head. This vision of youth passed, leaving the dagger of passion in my heart, my soul in chains, and my eyes ready to remember and say to all other beauty: "You are ugliness."

As soon as the sound of the music had faded from my ears, I came out from behind the sack and left the shop; immediately I saw the markets take on life and the merchants and purchasers appear as if by magic and go about their business. I determined to ask one of them the meaning of what I had seen and the name of the woman who rode upon the starry-fronted mare; but the first man I questioned turned yellow in the face and, pulling up his draperies, ran away from me, as if the hour of his destiny pursued him. I stopped a second merchant and asked the same question; but he looked in the opposite direction as if he had not heard me, and passed by. I accosted many more; but they all remained silent and avoided me as if I had come up out of a cesspool or were brandishing a terrible sword. Then I determined that my last resort was the barber; for I knew that those who exercise that profession have ever an itching tongue and a word lying near the end of it. Therefore I entered a barber's shop and, giving him all my money, asked him the question. The man rolled his eyes in terror and then answered: "If you would keep your head upon your neck, good uncle, you must not speak of what you have seen. Also I advise you to leave the city without delay. I can say no more; for the matter is a mystery which tortures all Bassora. Men die like locusts here, if they are not hidden before that procession comes. The slave who walks with a naked sword ruthlessly decapitates any head she sees. That is all I can say."

As soon as the barber had finished shaving my head, I left that city, finding no peace until I had gone out from the shadow of its walls. I travelled over field and desert until at last I came to this place. Day and night, eating and drinking and sleeping, I could think of nothing but that snatch of beauty seen at unawares. When I passed your shop today and beheld your son, his beauty reminded me of the marvel of Bassora; for he is as like her as if the two were twins. It was that resemblance which caused my tears, my sighs, and my emotion. Surely I must be mad.

When the dervish had finished his tale, he looked at young Kamar and shed fresh tears. Then he said, sobbing: "Now, in Allah's name, show His servant the door which leads from your house and let him depart upon the road of his destiny. I pray one prayer for you: that He who has created two perfect creatures in your son and in the girl of Bassora, may crown His work by bringing about their union."

So saying he rose, in spite of the merchant's entreaties that he should stay, and went out sighing into the street. So much for him.

Young Kamar could not close his eyes all night for thinking of the girl who had appeared in the old man's story. At dawn he went into his mother's room and woke her, saying: "Make me a bundle of clothes and provisions, for I must set out on the road to the city of Bassora, where my destiny awaits me." His mother lamented and called her husband, to whom she repeated this unexpected determination. Abd Al-Rahman tried to reason his son away from his purpose; but Kamar would only answer: "If I do not go to Bassora immediately, I shall surely die." So the merchant and his wife were compelled to

acquiesce with sighs of foreboding, and you may be sure that Kamar's father put all the blame upon his wife. "O Abd Al-Rahman," he muttered to himself, "this is the end of all your careful prudence! There is no power or might save in Allah! That which is written must come to pass; none may fight against the decrees of Destiny!" Meanwhile Kamar's mother, doubly grieving at her husband's anger and her son's loss, was constrained to prepare for the boy's departure. She gave him a little bag into which she had fastened forty large jewels of the first water; rubies, diamonds, and emeralds. "Guard this carefully, my son," she said, "for it will be of use if you should come to lack money." The merchant gave his son ninety thousand gold dinars; and the two old people, with many tears, embraced him in farewell. Abd Al-Rahman gave him into the care of the master of a caravan which was setting out for Irak, and Kamar left the city of his birth in its company. Later, by the blessing of Allah, he arrived without accident at Bassora.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-eighty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT WAS ON a Friday morning that he came into the city, and he was thus able to control the truth of the dervish's tale; for the markets were empty, the streets deserted, and the shops lay open with all their goods, but with no sign of buyer and seller. As he was hungry, he ate and drank his fill and then, on hearing

distant music, hid himself as the dervish had done. He saw the girl pass with her forty maidens and, at the first glimpse of her unveiled face, swooned in the corner where he had concealed himself.

When he came to himself, he found the market thronged and folk bustling about their business as if nothing had happened. Still dreaming of the woman's face, he bought magnificent garments from the chief merchants and took a long and detailed bath at the nearest hammam. He came out shining like a young king, and searched out the shop of the barber who had shaved the dervish's head. He entered it with courteous greeting, and said to the proprietor: "O father of light hands, I wish to talk to you in private. I beg you to shut your shop and take this purse to pay you for the loss of custom." The barber took the purse of dinars which Kamar handed to him and, after weighing it with a quick gesture of the hand, thrust it into his belt. When the two were alone together, the boy said again: "O father of light hands, I am a stranger in this city and wish to learn why the markets were deserted this Friday morning." Quite won over by the fine air and open-handed generosity of his questioner, the barber answered: "That is a secret which I have never tried to penetrate, though I am very careful to shut myself away on Friday mornings; but, as the matter seems to touch you deeply, I will do for you what I would not do for my own brother. I will make you acquainted with my wife, who sells perfume among all the harems of Bassora and knows everything which passes in the city. As you are obviously impatient, I will go at once to my wife and put your case before her. Wait here until I return."

The barber hurried home and gave his wife the

purse, telling her of Kamar's enquiry. At once the shrewd and kind-hearted woman cried: "May he be welcome to our city! I am ready to serve him with my head and eyes. Bring him to me at once." So the barber returned to his shop and led Kamar to his own home, where the woman set him in the seat of honour upon the couch, and greeted him: "Let this be a home of liberty to our charming guest! The house is your house and we, the masters of it, are your slaves! It is for you to command and for us to obey." Then she served him with sweet refreshments on a copper tray, and made him take a spoonful of every kind, saying, as he swallowed each: "May it be a delight and a comfort to the heart of our gracious guest!"

As soon as he had tasted all, Kamar placed a large handful of gold pieces on the knees of the barber's wife, saying: "Excuse the poverty of this gift; I swear by Allah that you will find me more generous in the future. Now, good mother, I pray you tell me all you know concerning the object of my anxiety." So the barber's wife said:

My son, light of my eye, and crown of my head, one day the sultan of Bassora received as a gift from the sultan of India a pearl so beautiful that it must have been born from the glance of a sunbeam on the sea. It was both white and gold, according to the way the light struck it, and there was a movement in its breast as of a fire burning below milk. The king looked at it for a whole day and then determined to carry it on a silk ribbon round his neck, so that he might behold it always. As it was virgin and imperforate, he called the jewellers of Bassora to him, saying: "I wish you to pierce this sovereign pearl. He who can do it without harm may ask the wish

of his heart and it shall be granted. He who has the misfortune to be clumsy and to spoil my pearl shall die the most terrible of deaths; for I will behead him after having practised upon him those tortures which are worthy of his sacrilegious ineptitude. What have you to say to this, my jewellers?"

The jewellers became afraid, and answered as with one voice: "O king of time, to pierce a pearl like that is a most delicate undertaking. To operate on an ordinary pearl requires fingers picked from a hundred thousand, and the greatest of us must expect some few accidents before we succeed. We beg that you do not put us to a trial of which we are altogether unworthy; for we can tell the king where he may find the skill which we lack. Surely the sheikh of our guild can pierce this pearl." "Who is your sheikh?" demanded the king; and they replied: "He is Obayd, the master jeweller. He has more skill than the rest of us put together. He has an eye in the end of each finger and each of those eyes is of a superhuman sensibility." "Bring him to me!" cried the king.

The jewellers departed and returned with their sheikh, Obayd, who kissed the earth between the king's hands and waited for an order. The sultan told him what was required and mentioned the rewards and penalties attaching to success or failure. The jeweller Obayd took the marvellous pearl and examined it for an hour; then he cried: "I deserve to die if I cannot drill this pearl of marvel!" With the king's permission, he squatted down, there and then, and placed the pearl securely between his two heels; then, fetching certain fine tools out of his belt, he began to use them with a supreme lightness of touch and the careless dexterity of a child playing with a top. In less time than it would have taken another man to

blow an egg, he had drilled the pearl, without in the least roughening it or chipping it, so that the two ends of the hole were equal and symmetrical. He wiped it on his sleeve and returned it to the king, who trembled for joy and satisfaction. At once the sultan threaded the pearl upon a silk cord and, as it hung like a little sun about his neck, looked down at it on every side with a glow of great content.

Then he turned to the jeweller, saying: "Now for your wish, O master craftsman!" Obayd reflected for an hour, and then replied: "Allah prolong the life of our king! But the slave whose crippled hands have had the notable honour of touching our master's pearl, possesses a young wife without whose advice he dare do nothing; for he is an old man and, after the fashion of old men, he has to spoil his wife in order not to be distasteful to her. I beg you, O king of time, to allow me to consult my wife, for perhaps she may have some better wish to suggest than any which I could imagine for myself. Allah has not only given her youth and charm, but also a sound judgment and rich imagination." "Go quickly, O Obayd," answered the king, "for I shall have no rest until I have fulfilled my promise." So the jeweller hastened to his wife and told her all. As soon as she heard that the sultan would satisfy her husband's any wish, the girl exclaimed: "Glory be to Allah, my day has come before its time! For I have a wish already formed, a strange and delightful wish. Thanks to Allah's goodness and your wisdom in affairs, we are rich and out of reach of want for ever. Therefore we have no need to ask money, and my wish can be satisfied without the king expending a single dirham of his treasure. I desire, only and simply, leave to ride through the city every Friday morning with a train

like that of a princess, and that the markets and streets be cleared before me and that no one dare to show himself or look upon me under pain of death. Surely that is a small reward for the piercing of a pearl."

"Allah karim!" cried the astonished jeweller, "Who may boast that he understands what passes in the brains of women?" But then, as he loved his wife and was too old and ugly to risk her discontent, he said: "O daughter of my uncle, your wish is upon my head and before my eyes. But consider this: if the merchants leave all their goods without guard and go to hide themselves as you pass by, the dogs and cats will raid their counters and the loss will be upon our conscience." "That is no difficulty," said his wife, "An order must be given for all dogs and cats to be shut away on Fridays. I wish especially for the shops to remain open while my train goes through the city. But all the citizens, great and small, must hide themselves behind the closed doors of the mosques and none put forth his head without losing it."

The jeweller Obayd went in confusion to the king and told him of his wife's wish. "I see no reason against it," said the king; and straightway gave order, through his heralds, that the citizens should leave their shops open on every Friday morning, two hours before the prayer, and hide themselves in the mosques. They were warned that, if they showed their heads in the street, they should lose them; and were advised to shut away all dogs and cats, donkeys and camels, which might harm the goods left unguarded upon the stalls. Since that time, the jeweller's wife has gone in procession every Friday morning, two hours before the noon prayer, and no man or dog or cat has dared to show himself in the street.

It was she whom you saw this morning, my lord Kamar, going about in glory with her forty girls, and attended by the young slave with the naked sword."

The barber's wife fell silent and looked at Kamar with a smile; then she added: "But I see, dear master and face of sweetness, that the tale alone is not enough for you, that you will not be content unless you see the old jeweller's wife again." "Such is my desire, good mother," answered Kamar, "It was to see her that I left my country and a weeping father and mother in my house." "Then tell me what valuables you have, my son," requested the woman. "Mother," the boy replied, "I have jewels of four grades: the first are worth five hundred golden dinars, the second seven hundred dinars, the third eight hundred and fifty dinars, and the best at least a thousand dinars each." "And would you part with four of them, each of a different grade?" she asked. "I would part with them all and everything else I have," he answered. "Then rise up, my son, rise up, O generous crown upon my head," said she, "Seek out the jeweller Obayd in the goldsmith's market and, when you have met him, do exactly as I tell you."

She gave him minute instructions, and added: "Use prudence and patience in all things, my son. And, when you have profited by my advice, do not forget to return with news, bringing a hundred dinars for my husband the barber, who is a poor man." Kamar agreed to this and left the house, repeating the instructions of the scent seller over and over again, and thanking Allah who had set such a powerful talisman upon his way.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-eighty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN HE CAME to the market of the goldsmiths and had been directed to the shop of the sheikh of the jewellers, he hastened forward till he found Obayd among his apprentices. He wished him peace, carrying his hand with great respect to heart and lips and brow, and the old man returned his greeting and begged him to be seated. Soon Kamar drew from his purse a jewel of miraculous beauty, though chosen from among the lowest grade which he possessed, and handed it, with twenty pieces of gold, to Obayd, saying: "Good master, I wish you to mount this stone in a ring; but though I require workmanship worthy of your great renown, I do not need any but the simplest and lightest setting. This money is a feeble advance against the completion of the work." Then he gave a gold piece to each of the many apprentices, as a matter of greeting, and gold to each of the numberless beggars; for they seemed to have sprung up in the street as soon as the richly dressed young stranger entered the shop. When he retired, he left all who had seen him marvelling at his liberality and beauty and distinguished manners.

Obayd would not allow a moment's delay in the construction of the ring; as he had unparalleled dexterity, and appliances to his hand such as no other jeweller on earth possessed in that age, he finished the work exquisitely by the time the sun went down. Then, as he did not expect young Kamar until the morning, he took the ring back with him to show it to his wife,

for he felt that the flashing quality of the stone would make her mouth water.

The girl found the ring very much to her taste and asked for whom it had been made. "For a young man far more beautiful than the gem itself, though that is fair enough," answered her husband, "He paid me in advance more than I have ever received before for so simple an undertaking; but that is nothing. Believe me, my dear, his eyes wound all the world, his cheeks are petals of anemone fallen upon a terrace strewn with jasmin, his mouth is the seal of Sulayman, and his lips are dyed with the blood of rubies; he has the neck of a young antelope and it bears up the glory of his head as a lily is carried on its dew-wet stem. He is above all praise, for he has beauty such as a craftsman can appreciate, and is as charming as he is beautiful. These things make him resemble you in everything, my love."

Thus the jeweller painted Kamar to his wife and did not see that his words lit a flame of passion in her heart, the greater because she had not seen the youth. Though he had a forehead as ripe for horns as a well-dunged field is ripe for cucumbers, he did not know that the most successful pander of all is a husband talking of a stranger's beauty. By this you may see that Allah blinds His creatures, when He needs them to further the designs of Destiny.

His young wife laid up the glowing description in her heart, but was very careful not to show the agitation which possessed her. Instead, she asked to be shown the ring, in a tone of absolute indifference, and, when she had received it, put it carelessly upon her finger, with an air of utter detachment. "See how well it fits me," she said, "it might have been made for me." "The fingers of the houris are all alike,"

answered her husband, "Sweet mistress, the owner is both generous and thoughtful; tomorrow I will ask him to sell me the ring, for any price he cares to name, and then you shall wear it always."

During that time, Kamar had carried his news to the barber's wife and given her a hundred golden dinars for her husband, that poor man. When he asked what more he should do, she answered: "When you see the jeweller tomorrow, pretend that the ring is too small for your finger and give it to him as a present; then hand him one of those gems which are worth seven hundred dinars, and ask him to set it choicely in another ring. Give him sixty dinars and present each of his workmen with two. Also do not forget the beggars at the door. All this will turn to your advantage. And when you bring me news, my son, do not forget a little something for the barber, that poor man."

Next morning Kamar presented himself at Obayd's shop, and the old man, after greeting him most respectfully and rising in his honour, gave him the ring. Kamar pretended to try it on, and then said: "It is excellently made, my master, but is a little too narrow for my finger. Keep it, I pray, and give it to one of the numberless slaves in your harem. In the meantime, I desire you to mount this jewel, which I certainly prefer to the other one." He handed the second stone to Obayd with sixty dinars for himself and two for each of his apprentices, remarking as he did so: "Simply to buy sherberts! But I trust that you will all be satisfied with my idea of a payment when the work is over." Then he departed, throwing gold pieces to left and right among the beggars at the door.

The jeweller was more astonished than ever at

such liberality; and that evening he could not help saying to his young wife: "As Allah lives, the youth is not contented with being more beautiful than any who have gone before him; he must needs be as open-handed as a king's son." This speech fanned the flame of love which the woman had in her heart for Kamar; as she slowly put on the ring, which his generosity had made her own, she asked if he had not ordered a second. "He ordered a second and I have already made it," answered her husband. "Let me see it," she commanded; and, when he gave it into her hands, exclaimed: "Oh, I should like to keep it!" "Who knows?" murmured her foolish husband, "Perhaps he will leave it with me as he left the other."

During that time, Kamar had taken his news to the barber's wife, together with four hundred dinars for the barber, that poor man. "Your affair goes excellently, my son," she said, "When you see the jeweller tomorrow, pretend that the ring is too big and leave it with him as a gift; but entrust him with one of the eight hundred and fifty dinar stones. Give him a hundred dinars for himself and three for each of his apprentices. And when you bring me news, my son, do not forget a little something for my husband, that poor man, that he may be able to buy a crust of bread. Now Allah guard you and prolong your days, O child of generosity!"

Kamar followed the scent seller's instructions to the letter, and the jeweller could find no words to paint the liberality of his young customer to his wife. As she tried on the new ring, she said: "Son of my uncle, are you not ashamed that you have never asked so generous a buyer to taste the hospitality of your house? You are not a miser, I thank Allah, nor were any of your ancestors misers; but sometimes you seem

to me a little to lack breeding. It is your plain duty to ask this stranger to take bread and salt with you."

In the meantime, Kamar had consulted the barber's wife a third time and given her eight hundred dinars to hand to her husband, that poor man, that he might have wherewith to buy a crust of bread. On the following morning he presented himself at the jeweller's shop to try on the third ring; but, after he had slipped it on his finger, he drew it off again and looked at it with disfavour, saying: "It fits well enough, but the stone does not please me at all. Keep it to give to one of your slaves, and mount this other jewel for me fittingly. Here is an advance of four hundred dinars and four for each of your apprentices. I must beg you to pardon me for all the trouble I am causing you." So saying, he gave Obayd a white and marvellous stone worth at least a thousand dinars, and the jeweller said confusedly: "Dear master, will you consent to honour my house with your presence and favour me with your company at supper this evening? Your benefits are thick upon me and my heart has gone out to you." "Be it upon my head and before my eyes," replied the youth, and he gave the jeweller the address of the khan at which he lodged.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-eighty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THAT EVENING the jeweller fetched his guest from the khan and conducted him to his own house, where

the two feasted splendidly together. As soon as the dishes of meat and drink had been removed, a slave served them with sherbets which the jeweller's wife had prepared with her own hands. For, in spite of the desire which burned her, she would not offend the decencies by taking part in the meal; but waited in the harem for the result of her expedient.

As soon as Kamar and his host had tasted the delicious sherbet, they fell into a profound sleep, for the girl had mingled a soporific powder with their cups; and the slave who had served them retired, as soon as she saw them lying still, to tell her mistress.

The girl had waited, dressed only in her chemise and all prepared as if for a second bridal night; she raised the curtain and walked softly into the feast hall, and if you had seen her eyes languishing among the disorder of her hair you would have felt your heart crack. She came to where Kamar was sleeping and looked down upon him for a long while. Never had she beheld so beautiful a youth and her heart leapt mightily within her. She passed her hands softly against his face, feeling the youthful freshness of his skin. Leaning over the sleeping youth she kissed him upon his lips and his cheeks and, in sport, bruised him with her delicate teeth.

She did not weary of her vigil all night; but when morning came she rose, weary from her wakefulness, and, taking four knuckle-bones from her breast, placed them in his pocket. As soon as she had returned to the harem, she sent her faithful slave, the one who guarded her possessions with a naked sword, to wake the old jeweller and the boy, by making them breathe a powdered antidote. When they sneezed and woke, the slave said to Obayd: "My mistress Halima com-

manded me to rouse you and tell you that the muezzin is even now calling Believers to the morning prayer. I have brought you water for ablution." "As Allah lives," cried the old man in a maze, "one sleeps soundly in this hall! Each time I lie here, I do not wake until the sun is high." Kamar did not know what to answer, but, when he felt during his ablution that his lips and cheeks and those parts which did not show were burning as with fire, he said: "My lips and cheeks feel as if they had been touched with red-hot coals. What can be the meaning of it?" "That is nothing," answered the jeweller, "those are only mosquito bites. It was foolish of us to sleep without a curtain." "Why are there no bites upon your face also?" asked Kamar. "Because mosquitos love young blood and a fair beardless face, but hate the cheeks of hairy age," replied Obayd, as he turned to make his prayer. The two broke fast together, and then Kamar took leave of his host and went to report to the barber's wife.

She greeted him with a laugh, saying: "You need not tell me of your night, my son, for I see a thousand tokens of it on your face." "Those are mosquito bites and nothing more, good mother," answered Kamar seriously. The barber's wife laughed more loudly still. "Mosquito bites?" she scoffed. "Was that all you bore away from the house of love?" "No," said he, "I bore away four knuckle-bones such as children play with. I found them in my pocket, but I do not know how they got there." "Show them to me," she said; and, after examining them, went on in great delight: "You are very simple, my son, if you cannot distinguish between mosquito bites and the passionate kisses of a desirous woman. She put these bones in your pocket herself, meaning to reproach you for sleeping when you might have been

better employed with her. They signify: 'You are a child who plays with sleep, because he does not know the other game.' You can prove what I say this evening, for I am sure that the jeweller will invite you again. Now, see that you behave to your own satisfaction and to hers, and also to the satisfaction of the mother who loves you, my son. When you come back with news, smile of my eye, remember the wretched state of my husband, that poor man." "I shall remember," answered Kamar, as he took leave before returning to the khan.

"And how did you behave to your young guest?" asked Halima when her husband sought her in the harem. "With honour and respect," he answered, "but I am afraid he must have passed a poor night, for this morning he had been bitten all over his face by mosquitoes." "You should have slept under a net," said Halima, "He will not be troubled in the same way tonight if you take that precaution. . . . I hope you are going to ask him again; it is the least that you can do when he has been so generous." The jeweller was all the more pleased to agree to this second invitation, as he began himself to feel a great affection for the youth.

When Kamar came to the shop that day, the old man most courteously invited him to a second supper. This time, Obayd took the precaution of providing a mosquito netting for himself and his guest. Despite this, however, Kamar had much the same experience as before; for Halima drugged the two again and spent the dark hours beside her sleeping youth. When Kamar came out of his heavy sleep on the following morning, he felt all his body scratched, for Halima had, wantonly, cut him about the arms and chest with the point of a little sharp knife she carried; but he said

nothing to the jeweller when the old man asked him how he had slept. Instead, he took courteous leave and hurried to the barber's wife. As he arrived at her husband's shop, he plunged his hand into his pocket and found a knife which had not been there before. So, after he had given his wise guide five hundred gold dinars as a compliment to her husband, that poor man, he showed her the knife. The old woman kissed his hand, and cried: "Allah guard you, my child, for your mistress is angry and threatens to kill you if she finds you sleeping a third time." "But how can I help sleeping?" asked Kamar, "I tried to keep awake last night but could not." "Let the jeweller drink alone," urged the barber's wife, "Throw the sherbert behind you, as you pretend to drink it, and then feign to sleep before the eyes of the slave." Kamar thanked her for her advice and determined to act upon it.

That night Obayd invited Kamar to a third supper, according to the usages of hospitality, and, as soon as the slave who brought the sherbet saw the two men lying still before her, she went and told her mistress.

The burning Halima raged, because she thought the youth did not understand the signals which she had left upon him, so she entered the hall with a knife in her hand, ready to plunge it into the offender's breast. But Kamar rose with a smile and bowed before her. "Who taught you that trick?" asked the girl, and Kamar explained that he had been taking lessons from the barber's wife. "She is clever!" exclaimed Halima, "But now I shall teach you myself. I do not think that you will dislike the lessons."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent lest the sun should find her still speaking.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-eighty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

NOW HALIMA was indeed an expert in those matters of a woman's artfulness and the callow, inexperienced Kamar was as soft wax in her fingers. He sought not to refuse her slightest wish; he drank in his new knowledge of the mysteries as greedily as a thirsty camel who comes upon an oasis. Halima's vanity, which was inordinately great, was pleased with her successful conquest. As for Kamar, he praised Allah who gives wings to the fledged bird and teaches it to fly and teaches the kid to dance from the first day, who supplies the neck of the young lion, who jets the river from the rock, and plants in the hearts of His Believers that which is as beautiful as the sun's first triumphant rays at dawn of day.

As the night lengthened, the expert Halima turned to her new-found valiant and addressed him most tenderly, saying: "Fruit of my heart, I cannot live without you. . . .

"One or two nights, one or two weeks, one or two months, one or two years, will not suffice me. I must leave my old and ugly husband, I must follow you to your own land and live with you for ever. Listen to me now, and if you have loved our night, do as I say: if my husband asks you again, tell him that the nature of man is such that it would be indiscreet of you to keep him for more than three nights away from his harem. Then beg him to hire a house for you near ours, so that you can pass the evenings together without inconvenience to each other. I will advise my husband to do as you request; after that Allah will pro-

vide." Kamar swore to do her bidding and, between them they ratified the oath thus made. But Time, which is as careless of lovers as of kings, poured the drops of the night one by one, nor could even the expert Halima stay them.

At length Kamar laid himself down by the jeweller as if nothing had happened, and in the morning would have taken his leave without a word; but Obayd constrained him with an invitation to come again that night. So Kamar begged him to hire a house near by, in order that neither might inconvenience the other. The old jeweller readily agreed and immediately went forth to rent the house which lay against his own. While he was furnishing it richly and installing his young friend, the expert Halima had an opening made in the wall of partition, and hid it by a cupboard on each side.

Early next morning, to Kamar's joyful surprise, Halima came to him in the bedroom of his new house and, after explaining the mystery of the cupboards, bade him to show his appreciation of her ingenuity. After Kamar had complied with her request, Halima thought for a moment, then drew a dagger from her breast and gave it to her lover, saying: "This belongs to my husband; he jewelled the hilt of it himself. Take it to his shop tomorrow and ask him how much it is worth. When he wishes to know where you obtained it, tell him that you bought it from a man who boasted that his mistress had stolen it from her old and ugly husband. While he is pondering your words, hasten back here and pass the dagger through the wall to me."

Kamar did as he had been told, and the old jeweller was plunged into a great trouble of spirit by the sight of the dagger. Kamar left him muttering to himself

and, hurrying to his own chamber, passed the dagger through the wall to Halima.

Obayd ran home to his wife, hissing like a jealous snake, and rushed into her chamber, crying: "Where is my dagger?" Halima cast wondering eyes at him, and answered innocently: "It is in the casket, in its usual place; but you look so wild that I will not give it you." Then, when the jeweller swore that he would do no one a mischief, she opened the casket and handed him the dagger. "A miracle!" he cried, "I could have taken any oath that I saw this dagger in my young friend's belt." "Unworthy old man!" exclaimed Halima, "Have you dared to suspect me?" So the jeweller humbly begged her pardon and comforted her as best he might.

Next morning, after playing seven games of chess with her lover upon his couch, Halima sat down to consider how she might open the eyes of her husband and get him to divorce her. "I have a better plan this time," she said at length, "I will dress myself as a slave, and you must lead me to my husband's shop. Then you must tell him that you bought me at the market, and lift my veil that he may see my face. Surely that will open his eyes!" She rose and, dressing herself as a slave, accompanied her lover to her husband's shop. "I have bought a slave for a thousand dinars," said Kamar to the old jeweller, "Does she please you?" So saying, he lifted Halima's veil, and poor Obayd nearly fell to the floor when he recognised his wife, decked with the work of his own hands and wearing the rings which he had made for Kamar. "What is her name?" he stuttered; and Kamar answered: "Her name is Halima." At this old Obayd fell fainting to the floor and the lovers ran from the shop.

As soon as he came to himself, the jeweller hurried to his house and well-nigh perished of surprise when he found his wife sitting demurely in her own chamber, dressed as he had seemed to see her in the shop. "There is no power or might save in Allah!" he cried, "My young friend has just bought a slave, and I could have sworn that you were she." Feigning great indignation, Halima exclaimed: "Calamitous grey-beard, do you dare to suspect me? Go to our neighbour at once and, if what you say is true, you will find the slave sitting beside him." "You are right," answered the unfortunate old man, "That will be certain proof." So he climbed painfully downstairs and left the house to visit Kamar.

Halima immediately passed through the wall and was sitting with Kamar when her husband entered. "Allah is great!" murmured the jeweller in face of that extraordinary resemblance, "He forms His creatures in the shapes which please Him best." In troubled perplexity, he returned to his own house and, finding his wife as he had left her, heaped apologies on her and praises of her virtue, before going back to his shop.

As soon as her husband had retired, Halima rejoined Kamar and said to him: "Nothing will teach these old fools! It only remains for us to leave this city. The camels are ready and the caravan awaits us." She covered herself with her veil, and the two went out to join themselves to the caravan. Allah had decreed that they should arrive in Egypt without accident.

Kamar was received at his father's house with tears of jubilation and, when Halima entered behind him, the eyes of all were dazzled by her beauty. "Is she a princess, my son?" asked the merchant; but Kamar answered: "She is not a princess, yet she was the

cause of my departure from among you, the marvellous girl of whom the dervish spoke. Now I propose to marry her." He told his father the whole story of his adventure; but nothing would be gained by repeating it in this place.

When he had heard all, the venerable Abd Al-Rahman cried out in horror: "I curse you in our world and the next, my son, if you marry a hell-born woman such as this. One day she would treat you as shamefully as she has treated her husband, the jeweller! Put aside all thought of her, and I will choose a well-born wife for you among the daughters of my friends." He spoke so wisely and at such length that Kamar answered: "I will act in all things according to your wish, my father." So the merchant kissed him and ordered Halima to be kept prisoner in a pavilion, at some distance from the house, until he could make up his mind concerning her.

After anxious searchings in the city, Abd Al-Rahman married Kamar to the kadi's daughter, who was the fairest maiden in all Cairo. At the end of forty days of feasting and dancing and coloured fires, a special festival was given for the poor, and all the needy of the city gathered round the dishes which were loaded for them.

Kamar, who was overseeing the service of this feast, beheld an old man among the poorest of the poor, dressed in rags and marked both by the sun and heavy grief. Looking at him closely, he recognised the jeweller Obayd, and ran to tell his father. "The time has come to undo the wrong you did," exclaimed the merchant and, going among his guests, he called the old man by name and kissed him tenderly and asked the reason of his sudden poverty. Obayd told him that he had left Bassora to escape the mockery of his

foes, and had fallen into the hands of a troop of marauding Arabs, who had spoiled him of everything he carried. Abd Al-Rahman conducted him to the hammam and, after the bath, clothed him in rich garments. Then he said: "You are my guest and I owe you the truth. Your wife Halima is here, prisoned in one of my pavilions. I had thought to send her back with an escort to Bassora, but now that you are here her fate is in your hands. I will lead you to her, and you may either pardon her or treat her as she deserves. I know the whole painful story and can assure you that your wife is alone to blame. A man has nothing with which to reproach himself, when he is seduced by a woman, because Allah has planted in him an instinct to yield; but when a woman is tempted and does not repulse a man, she is most reprehensible. Alas, my brother, a man with a wife needs to be very wise and patient." "You are right, my brother," answered the jeweller, "She alone is to blame. Where is she?" Kamar's father held out the keys of the pavilion and pointed the way to it. With many expressions of joy the old man took the keys and, unlocking the door of the pavilion, strode into his wife's presence. He walked towards her without a word and, flinging his two hands about her neck, strangled her, as he cried: "Thus shall all wantons die!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-eighty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IN ORDER TO undo his son's fault, the merchant Abd Al-Rahman considered it meritorious in the sight

of Allah to marry his daughter Morning-Star to Obayd. But Allah has more generosity and greater wisdom!

As Shahrazade fell silent, King Shahryar cried: "May all unfaithful wives suffer the death of Halima! A great many of your stories ought to have ended in this way. But I must confess that you have often angered me, Shahrazade, by assigning a quite different destiny to some of the women in your tales. You ought to have known better, remembering the way I punished my unfaithful wife and all her slaves. The curse of Allah be upon them!" Not wishing the king to brood further on his wrongs, Shahrazade made no answer, but hastened to begin . . .

THE TALE OF THE LEG OF MUTTON

IT IS RELATED—but Allah knows all—that there was once in Cairo a girl of such subtlety that it was as easy for her to pass through the eye of a needle as to drink a cup of water. Allah had dowered her with so ardent a temperament that, if she had been one of the four wives of a Believer and had received only the nights allowed her by law, she would speedily have died of frustration; but she had arranged her life so well that she was not only a man's single wife, but the single wife of two men, each doughty fellows of Upper Egypt, than whom there is scarce a stronger breed on earth. She had taken such wise precautions that neither man supposed that he was living in a way forbidden by the Faith. In this she was helped by the professions of her two husbands; for the one named Haram was a robber, working by night and returning

only for the day, and the other, called Akil, was a pick-pocket who laboured all day and only returned to her for the night.

Weeks and months passed while the two husbands valiantly played the cock indoors and the fox outside, without having the least suspicion that they shared the same hearth. A day came, however, when Haram, after contenting the girl with his inheritance more amply than usual, said to her: "An affair of great importance calls me from the city. Pray for the success of my enterprise, dear wife, that I may the sooner return to you." "May the name of Allah be upon you and about you, O head of my life!" answered the girl, "What will happen to this poor wretch while her strong one is away?" She would not let him depart without giving him a thousand ardent proofs of her attachment, so that Haram went forth, swinging a bag of provisions which she had stocked for him and clicking his tongue with delight.

An hour afterwards, Akil the pickpocket returned and also told the woman that he had to leave the city. The girl gave him an even more remarkable farewell than the other, and then packed a bag of food for him, so that Akil left the house, giving praise to Allah that he had so warm and thoughtful a wife.

Destiny waits at the corner of the road, and these two husbands found it when they least expected it. At the end of his day's march, Akil the pickpocket entered a khan and fell into conversation with the only other guest. "My friend, you seem weary," remarked Akil; and Haram, for it was he, answered with a smile that he had a right to feel weary, since he had walked that day from Cairo. "I also have walked from Cairo," said Akil, "and I thank Allah that he

has given me a companion for the rest of my journey; for the Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!) has said: 'A companion is the best provision for the road.' Let us seal our friendship by taking bread and salt together. Here is my bag: I think that I can offer you fresh dates and a roast with garlic." "Allah increase you, good comrade!" answered Haram, "I accept your offer freely; but allow me to add my food to the common stock."

Both men emptied the contents of their bags upon the mat and, lo! they were exactly the same: loaves of sesame bread, dates, and half a leg of mutton. Though they were surprised at this coincidence, their astonishment was greater still when they found that the two halves of the leg of mutton fitted exactly. "Allah akbar!" they cried, "Surely it was written that this sheep would find its leg whole again, in spite of death and fire and seasoning!" Then the pick-pocket said: "Tell me, in Allah's name, where you obtained your portion." "My wife gave it to me before I started," answered the robber, "Now tell me where you found yours." "My wife gave it to me," replied Akil, "Will you tell me what part of the city you honour with your dwelling?" "I live near the Victory Gate," said Haram. "And so do I!" cried Akil. The two rascals went on from question to question until they discovered that they had both shared the same bed and hearth since the first day of their marriage. "May the devil be far from us!" they cried, "We have both been fooled by the same woman!" At first they were inclined to violence, but soon, being both wise and cautious, they agreed to return to the city together at once and tax the girl with their equivocal position.

When they came to their common home, the girl

opened the door and, seeing her two husbands together, realised that no shift of her imagination could conceal the truth; but she comforted herself with the thought that no man can resist the sight of tears; scattering her hair, she threw herself sobbing bitterly at the feet of the two men, and asked for forgiveness.

As they both loved her and were bound by her beauty, they lifted and pardoned her, after reading her a stiff lecture on the subject of perfidy. She listened in contrite silence, until they said: "We cannot go on living as before, in the face of all religious teaching; you must choose between us, and at once."

The girl lowered her head and reflected for a long time; but, in spite of the urgent solicitations of the two men, she could not choose between them; for they were equally strong and valiant, and she loved them equally. When their patience was exhausted and they bade her speak or take the consequences, she lifted her head, saying: "There is no power or might save in Allah! You have asked me to choose, but I cannot choose; I can find nothing to weigh the scale in either's favour. You both live by your skill and thus can lie down to rest with an easy conscience; for Allah judges His creatures according to their use of the talents which He has given, and will surely not repulse you at the last. Akil picks pockets by day, Haram steals by night; therefore I declare, before Allah and before you, that I will keep the man who shows the finer address in his next theft." The two agreed to this test and, when they cast lots for the first attempt, the choice fell to Akil.

So Akil led Haram to the market of the money changers and pointed out an old Jew, who made his way slowly from shop to shop in the exercise of his

profession. "You see that son of a dog?" he said, "Well, before he has finished his round, I will make him give me the bag of gold which he carries to hold the dinars of his exchange." So saying, he went up light as a feather behind the old man's back and, deftly picking his pocket of the prize, returned to Haram, who marvelled exceedingly and, at the same time, wished to depart in haste, for fear of being arrested as an accomplice. He led Akil away and congratulated him on his skill, saying: "As Allah lives, I know that I could not accomplish so brilliant a feat! I thought that no Believer could ever rob a Jew until he was dead." But Akil laughed, and answered: "That is only a beginning, my poor friend; that is not the way to loot a bag of gold. The law might get upon my track at any time and force me to disgorge. No, I am going to get the kadi himself to decide that the bag and its contents are mine and have never at all belonged to that gold-stuffed Jew." He took his companion to a retired corner of the market and, after opening the bag, carefully counted the gold pieces. Then he removed ten of them and replaced them by a copper ring. Finally he refastened the bag with great care and, approaching the Jew again, deftly slipped it back into its place in the pocket of the old man's kaftan. O Believers, skill is a gift from God!

The Jew had only taken a few steps when the pick-pocket approached him a third time, but, on this occasion, from the front and with ostentatious haste. "Vile son of Aaron," he cried, "you have done it once too often! Give me back my bag or come with me to the kadi!" The Jew, who had never seen his accuser before, confounded himself with excuses in order to avoid being beaten, and swore by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that Akil was making a mistake. But, instead

of listening to him, the pickpocket raised the whole market against the Jew and haled him along by his cloak, crying: "To the kadi, to the kadi!" Then, as the old man resisted, he dragged him by the beard through the hooting crowd, until the two were in the kadi's presence.

"What business is this?" demanded the kadi; and Akil answered: "O our master, this Jew is certainly the most audacious thief who has ever appeared before you. He stole a bag of gold from me and then dared to walk about the market, as if he belonged to the Faith and had no sin upon his conscience." At this point the Jew fumbled at the beard which had been half torn from his chin, and groaned: "I protest, O master! I had never seen this man before. He came up to me and handled me roughly and raised the whole market against me, so that my credit and my reputation for honesty have gone for ever." "Vile son of Israel," cried Akil, "since when has the word of a Jewish dog prevailed against the oath of a Mussulman? O our master the kadi, this trickster denies his theft with all the cunning of that Indian merchant, of whom you have doubtless heard." "I know no story about an Indian merchant," replied the kadi, "Tell it to me briefly." So Akil said: "This merchant had succeeded in inspiring such trust among the folk of his market that one day a vast sum of money was confided to him without a receipt. When the owner came to reclaim it, the merchant, knowing that there were no witnesses and no documents, denied that any deposit had been made. He would have enjoyed his ill-gotten gains if the kadi of that city had not made him confess in a most clever fashion and then administered two hundred strokes on the soles of his feet. I am sure that your lordship's known sagac-

ity will easily prove the guilt of this perfidious Jew. May I beg you to have him searched?"

The kadi ordered his guards to search the Jew and they soon found the bag of gold upon him. Then a great tumult rose, the old man swearing that the bag was his own and Akil contradicting him in opprobrious phrases. To still the noise the kadi bade each man declare the contents of the bag. The Jew said: "Good master, it contains five hundred golden dinars, neither more nor less." But Akil cried: "You lie, you dog; there are four hundred and ninety gold pieces in the bag and also a copper ring bearing my seal, if you have not removed it already." At once the kadi opened the bag in the presence of witnesses and, naturally, found that its contents agreed with the pickpocket's description; therefore he handed the bag to Akil and bade his men beat the Jew severely.

When Haram saw Akil thus come off with flying colours, he first congratulated him and then made an appointment to meet him near the sultan's palace that night, that he himself might undertake an exploit, with his rival as a witness. They met in the place appointed at the dark of night, and Haram said: "My friend, you have had the laugh of a Jew and a kadi; I am going to have the laugh of a sultan. See, here is my rope-ladder. You must come with me as a witness to what I do." Akil was terrified at the other's rashness, for he was a simple pickpocket, knowing nothing of the higher theft; but, being ashamed to withdraw, he helped him to throw the rope-ladder over the palace wall. The two climbed up and then, descending to the gardens, forced an entrance into the palace under cover of darkness.

They glided along many galleries until they came to the sultan's sleeping chamber, where Haram lifted

a curtain and showed his companion the king sleeping with a boy who sat beside him and tickled his feet to favour his slumber. The lad himself seemed drowsy and was chewing a morsel of mastic to keep himself awake.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-eighty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SEEING THESE THINGS, Akil felt his legs give beneath him for terror, but Haram whispered in his ear: "There is no need to be afraid. You spoke to the kadi, and I shall speak to the king." Leaving his companion behind the curtain, he crept up to the boy, with the silence of a moth moving upon velvet, gagged and bound him in one movement, and set him aside by the wall. He sat down in the other's place and began to tickle the soles of the king's feet, increasing the strength of the movement until the sultan yawned and woke; then Haram imitated the boy's voice, and said: "O king of time, since you cannot sleep, shall I tell you a tale?" "Certainly," answered the sultan; and Haram began: "There was once, O king of time, a robber named Haram and a pickpocket named Akil, who lived in a certain city of the cities of the world and were rivals in audacity and skill. One day each of them undertook . . ." and he told the sultan of Akil's stroke in all its details and then most brazenly went on to outline the audacity which was even then taking place, only changing the sultan's name and

the position of the chamber. "Now tell me, O king of time," he concluded, "which of the two companions was more expert?" "The robber who broke into the king's palace, without a doubt," answered the sultan. Having obtained this answer, Haram pretended that he had a pressing need to piss, and went forth to the cabinet. He rejoined his companion, who had been listening in a cold sweat of fear, and the two left the palace by the way they had come.

Next morning the sultan, who had been drowsily surprised at the long absence of his favourite, was astonished to find him trussed up against the wall, exactly as in the tale which had been told him. He understood at once that he had been the victim of a bold thief; but, instead of growing angry, he announced through heralds that he pardoned the midnight intruder and would reward him generously if he presented himself at the palace. So Haram came and stood before the sultan, who praised him for his courage, and appointed him chief of police for all his kingdom. When the girl heard this, she chose Haram for her husband and lived with him pleasantly all the days of their life. But Allah knows all!

Shahrazade did not wish to leave this story to rankle in the king's mind for a whole day, so she at once began the prodigious tale which follows.

SHE SAID:

THE KEYS OF DESTINY

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious king, that the khalifat Muhamad bin Thaylun, sultan of Egypt, was as wise and good a ruler as his father had been cruel and

oppressive. Instead of torturing his subjects to make them pay the same taxes three or four times over, and beating them with sticks to make them dig up the few poor coins which they had hidden in the earth from the collectors, he bent his whole power to bring back tranquillity and justice to his people. He used the treasures which Thaylun had violently amassed, to protect poets and sages, to reward the valiant, and to help the poor. Therefore Allah blessed his reign; the risings of the Nile had never been so regular and abundant, the crops never so rich and frequent, the fields of lupine and lucern never so green, and the bags of the merchants' gold never so heavy.

One day Muhamad called all the dignitaries of his palace into his presence to interrogate them concerning their duties and wages and past services; for he wished to check their conduct and means of life with his own eyes and ears. "If I find any who toils wearily for light pay," said he, "I will lessen his duties and increase his salary; but if I find any who has easy work and extravagant payment, I will decrease his salary and augment his toil." First the wazirs appeared before him, forty venerable old men with long white beards and wise eyes. They wore jewelled turbans and leaned upon long staffs with amber heads, which were the symbols of their power. Next came the walis of provinces, the captains of the army, and all those whose duty near and far was to render justice and maintain the peace. One after another they knelt before the king and kissed the earth between his hands, while he questioned them closely, blaming some and rewarding others, according to their merits.

The last to present himself was the eunuch who bore the sword of justice, and, though he was a fat and idle

man, his face was sad. Instead of stalking into the presence proudly, with his blade borne naked over his shoulder, he entered with his sword in its sheath and a hanging head. He kissed the earth between Muhammad's hands, saying: "O master and crown upon our heads, surely the day of justice has dawned for your poor executioner! My lord, since the death of your father, the sultan Thaylun (may Allah have him in His keeping!) I have seen my duties and my profits dwindling day by day. My life used to be happy, but now it drags a mournful and a useless course. If Egypt remains peaceful and abundant, I shall die of hunger and not leave enough money to buy a winding-sheet. But Allah prolong our master's life!"

After reflection the khalifat Muhammad saw the justice of this complaint; for a sword-bearer's profits do not come from any rich stipend, but are dependent on the gifts and legacies of his victims. Therefore he cried: "We come from Allah and return to Him! Universal good is an illusion, for the happiness of one is bought by the tears of another. Lift up your heart and refresh your eyes, O executioner, for from henceforth you shall receive two hundred dinars every year to buy your clothes and victual. I pray to Allah that, while I live, your sword may lie unused within its sheath and take the rust of peace from the quiet years." The executioner kissed the hem of the khalifat's robe and returned to his place among the rank of officers. This shows the justice and mercy of Muhammad.

As the audience was about to be dismissed, the sultan saw a wrinkled and bent old man, whom he had not yet questioned; so he signed to him to approach, and asked him of his duties. "O king of time," the sheikh replied, "I have only one duty: to watch over a

casket which your dead father put into my charge. I receive ten gold dinars from the treasury every month for doing so." "But that is high pay for such easy work!" exclaimed the sultan, "What is in the casket?" "As Allah lives," answered the old man, "I have guarded it for forty years and I do not know." "Bring it to me quickly!" cried Muhamad.

The old man retired and immediately returned with a chest of solid and wonderfully carved gold; at a sign from his king he opened it for the first time. And lo, it contained only a little red earth, and a manuscript written in bright lettering on the purple-stained skin of a gazelle!

The sultan took the manuscript and tried to read the brilliant characters in which it was written; but, though he was learned in many tongues, he could make nothing of that lettering; nor were the wazirs and ulema who were present at all more successful. The sultan called all the famous sages of Egypt, Syria, Persia, and India to read the writing; but none of them could read it. What are sages after all but foolish old men in large turbans?

So the sultan Muhamad caused the news to be published throughout his empire that he would greatly reward any who could point out a man who should be able to read the unknown characters.

A few days after this announcement, an old man in a white turban presented himself before the sultan, saying: "Allah prolong the life of our master! The slave who stands before you used to serve your dead father, the sultan Thaylun; only today has he returned from the exile to which that gracious king condemned him. I come to tell you that the sole man who can read the manuscript written on gazelle skin is its owner, the sheikh Hassan Abdalla, son of Al-

Ashar, who was thrown into a dungeon forty years ago by your dead father. Allah alone knows if he groans there still or if he is dead." "Why was he cast into prison?" asked the sultan. "Because your dead father wished to force him to read the manuscript, after he had taken it from him by violence," answered the old man.

Muhamad immediately sent the captain of his guard to visit all the prisons, in the hope that the sheikh Hassan Abdalla might be still alive. Allah willed that the captain should find him living, and dress him in a robe of honour, and lead him into the sultan's presence. Muhamad saw an old man whose face was deeply marked by suffering; so he rose in his honour and begged forgiveness for his father's unjust act. Then he made Hassan Abdalla sit beside him and gave the manuscript into his hands, saying: "O sheikh, I do not wish to keep a thing which does not belong to me, even though it were the key to all the treasures of the world."

Hassan Abdalla shed abundant tears and turned his open palms towards the sky, crying: "O Lord, the source of all wisdom, who makes the poison and the antidote to flower in the same field, I have languished for forty years in a dungeon and now the son of my enemy has stretched out his hand and helped me forth, that I may die in the sunlight! Therefore I praise and adore You, O Lord, whose secret thoughts are hidden from the sight of man." Then he turned to the sultan, saying: "Dear master, that which I refused to violence, I freely accord to your compassion. Henceforth this manuscript, for which I risked a score of lives, belongs to you for ever. It is the beginning and end of all wisdom; it is the only thing which I brought away with me from the mysterious city of

Shaddad bin Ad, where no man may set his feet; from the city of Many-Columned Iram."

The khalifat kissed the old man, as he exclaimed: "My father, I beg you to tell me all you know about this manuscript and about Many-Columned Iram, the city of Shaddad bin Ad." "O king, the tale of the manuscript is the tale of my life," answered Abdalla, "If it were written with needles in the interior corner of an eye yet would it serve as a lesson to the circum-spect." And he told this story:

My father was one of the richest and most respected merchants in Cairo, and I was his only son. He spared no expense on my education and gave me the best masters in Egypt, so that, by the time I was twenty, I was already renowned among the ulema for my knowledge of ancient learning. Wishing to rejoice in my marriage, my father and mother wed me to a young virgin, who was light and fair, slim and dainty, and whose eyes were like pools reflecting stars. Magnificent feasts were given for us, and we two lived in great delight, not only for the first few nights but for ten years.

But who may fathom the intent of Destiny? After those ten years had flowed by like a dream, Fate cast all woes at once upon my house. In a few days my father perished of the plague, fire devoured the buildings of my inheritance, and the waters of the sea swallowed the ships which trafficked into far countries for my gain. I was left as poor as a child robbed of its mother's breast, with no resort save a belief in Allah; so I frequented the courts of the mosques, with the beggars of His bounty, and lived on the noble words of the santons who were my friends. Often I would have to return home without a crust of bread,

and famish throughout the night after having fasted all the day. My own misery was much, but I grieved more for the destitution of my mother and my wife and my little children.

One day, when Allah had sent me no alms, my wife took off her last garment and handed it to me weeping, and saying: "Try to sell this in the market that our children may have bread." So I took the garment and went forth with it; but as I walked towards the market, I met a Bedouin mounted on a red camel.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-eighty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN THE BEDOUIN saw me, he checked his camel and made it kneel. "Greeting, my brother," he said, "can you direct me to the house of the rich merchant named Hassan Abdalla, son of Al-Ashar?" I felt a sudden shame for my poverty, though it comes from Allah even as riches come from Him; so I hung my head and answered: "The blessing of Allah be upon you, O father of Arabs! But I know of no such man in Cairo." I would have gone on my way, but the Bedouin leapt from his camel's back and, taking both my hands in his, said reproachfully: "Allah is great and generous, my brother! But are you not yourself the sheikh Hassan Abdalla, son of Al-Ashar? And is it possible that you should hide your name in order to get rid of a guest whom Allah sends you?" In my confusion I could not check my tears; I begged

him to forgive me and would have kissed his hands, but he prevented me and took me in his arms, as if I had been his brother. So I led him towards my house.

The Bedouin walked by my side, leading his camel, and, as we went, my heart was tortured by the thought that I had nothing to set before my guest. When we arrived at the house, I hastened to tell my wife of this unexpected meeting; and she said to me: "A stranger is the guest of Allah, even the children's bread is due to him. Go out quickly and sell the garment to buy provisions for this Bedouin. If anything remains after he has eaten, we will live upon it." In order to go out, I had to pass the vestibule in which I had left my guest. "What are you hiding beneath your cloak, my brother?" he asked when he saw me. "Nothing," I answered in confusion; but he insisted, saying: "I beg you in Allah's name to tell me." Turning very red in the face, I showed him the garment, saying: "This belongs to my wife; I am taking it to a neighbour who is skilful at repairing such things." But the Bedouin cried: "Allah is generous, my brother! You would sell your wife's robe to fulfil the duties of hospitality towards a stranger! . . . Here are ten gold pieces, O Hassan. Go forth and buy what is necessary for the whole house." He kissed me so that I could not refuse the offer, and abundance returned to my poor home once more.

Every day the Bedouin gave me the same sum, which I spent in the same fashion, and for two weeks I glorified the generosity of Allah.

On the morning of the sixteenth day, my guest said to me: "Are you willing to sell yourself, O Hassan Abdalla?" "I am already your slave, good master," I answered, "both I and mine belong to you." But he continued: "I do not mean that; I ask

you if you are willing to sell yourself in reality. I do not wish to bargain, and will leave you to fix the price." Not doubting for a moment that he jested, I answered with a smile: "A free man's price is fixed by the Book at a thousand dinars, if he is killed at a single blow. But, if he receives three or four blows or is cut into several parts, the price is one thousand five hundred dinars." "That does not seem exorbitant," answered the Bedouin, "If you consent to the sale I will pay you the fifteen hundred." Realising at last that my guest was quite serious, I murmured to myself: "Allah has sent this Bedouin to save your children from the bitterness of hunger. If it is your destiny to be cut in pieces, you cannot escape." So I answered: "I agree to the sale, my brother; but I must have time to consult my family about it." "Take all the time you need," said he; and left me to go about his business.

Then, O king of time, I sought my mother, my wife, and my children. "Allah has saved you from adversity!" I cried; and told them of the Bedouin's offer; but my mother and my wife beat their breasts, wailing: "O woeful day! What will he do to you?" and my children ran to me, and held me by the garment. They all wept until my wife, who had been dowered with wisdom and a good counsel, exclaimed: "If you refuse, perhaps this evil Bedouin will reclaim the money which he has spent here; therefore you must go at once and try to sell this wretched house, our last possession, so that you may have money with which to satisfy him. Then you will owe him nothing and remain a free man." But, as she thought of our children in the street, she wept again, and my perplexity was greater than before. "O Hassan Abdalla, do not spurn this chance which Allah sends," I said

to myself, "If you sell yourself, your children will have bread for many months. But then, but then, why does he want to buy you? For what does he need you? Of what use can you be to him? If you were young and beardless! But your beard is like Hagar's train; you would not tempt a man from Upper Egypt. I fear he means your death to be a slow one, as he is willing to pay the fifteen hundred."

Yet, by the time the Bedouin returned in the evening, I had made up my mind; so I received him with a smiling face, and said: "I am yours, O guest!" At once he drew one thousand five hundred dinars from his belt and counted them over to me. "Pray for the prophet, O Hassan Abdalla!" he cried; and I said: "The prayer, the peace, and the blessing of Allah be upon Him!" Then said the Bedouin: "Now that you belong to me, O brother, you need have no fear; for you shall retain both life and freedom. I only bought you to be a faithful and agreeable companion to me on a long journey which I am about to undertake. The Prophet has said: 'A companion is the best provision for the road.'"

I returned joyfully to my mother and wife, and placed the fifteen hundred dinars on the mat where they were seated; but, instead of waiting for my explanation, they tore their hair and gave piercing cries of grief, as if they were already about my tomb. "Woe, woe, it is blood money!" they cried, "We will never touch the price of your dear life; we would rather die of hunger." I left them until they were quieter, and then returned to reason with them. By pointing out that the Bedouin was a man of excellent intention, only actuated by charity, I succeeded in diminishing their grief; so, taking advantage of the momentary calm, I kissed them good-bye, and kissed

my children good-bye, and departed sore at heart.

I accompanied the Bedouin to the beast market and, acting under his orders, first bought myself a camel famous for swiftness, and then filled the provision bags with food for a long journey. When all was ready, I helped my master on to the back of his camel and mounted my own. We invoked the name of Allah and set forth.

Soon we were in the desert, and rode on without a halt through those solitudes in which only Allah dwelt, and across those moving sands which held no human race. My master guided himself over these vast waves of sand by some hidden knowledge; and we rode beneath a burning sky for ten days, each as long to me as a night of evil dreams.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-ninetieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ON THE ELEVENTH morning, we came into a mighty plain which seemed to be made of grains of silver. In the middle of this plain there rose a high column of granite, bearing on its top the upright figure of a youth moulded in copper, whose right hand, open and extended, held a heavy key dangling from each of its five fingers. The first key was of gold, the second of silver, the third of Chinese copper, the fourth of iron, the fifth of lead; and all were magical. The man who mastered each had to bear the fate of each, for they were the keys of destiny: the gold was the key of

misery, the silver the key of suffering, the Chinese copper was the key of death, the iron the key of glory, and the lead the key of happiness and wisdom. But I knew nothing of the nature of the keys, and from my ignorance sprang all the misfortunes of my life. Yet good and evil come from Allah, and His creature must accept them with humility.

When we came to the foot of this column, the Bedouin dismounted from his camel and, while I was doing likewise, drew a strangely formed bow from its case and fitted an arrow to the string. He bent the bow and shot at the copper figure in the air, but, because he either lacked skill or feigned to lack it, the arrow fell far short. Then he turned to me and said: "Now you can repay me and buy back your liberty, for you are strong and skilful. Take this bow and shoot down the keys." Happy at the chance to regain my freedom, I took the bow with alacrity and saw that it was of skilful Indian workmanship. Wishing to cut a good figure in my master's eyes, I shot at the youth's hand with all my strength and skill, and my first arrow caused the gold key to fall to the ground. I picked it up proudly and would have handed it to the Bedouin; but he refused it, saying: "Keep it for yourself, good friend, as a reward for your excellent shooting." So I placed the gold key in my belt, not knowing that it was the key of misery.

My second shot dislodged the silver key and, as my master refused it also, I put it in my belt with the other, not knowing that it was the key of suffering.

My next two arrows brought down the iron key and the lead key, one of glory and the other of happiness and wisdom, had I but known it. The Bedouin pounced on them with a joyful exclamation: "Blessed be the womb that bore you, O Hassan Abdalla!

Blessed be the man who strengthened your arm and taught your eye! Now you are free!" When I would have kissed his hand, he took me in his arms; but when I would have given him the gold and silver keys, he said: "Keep them, for they are yours."

I fitted a fifth arrow and would have shot at the last key, the key of Chinese copper, not knowing that it was the key of death. But my master pulled the bow from my hands, crying: "What are you about, unhappy man?" I gave a start at his violence and dropped the arrow, which pierced my left foot, leaving a painful wound. That was the beginning of my misfortunes.

My master bound up the hurt as well as he could, and helped me on to my camel.

After three days and nights of riding which caused my foot great agony, we halted in a stretch of meadowland, thickly studded with trees which bore fair and unknown fruits exciting to the eye and hand. As I was driven hard by thirst, I dragged myself to one of the trees and, pulling down a fruit, coloured a gold-red and scented pleasantly, placed it in my mouth and bit upon it. At once my teeth fastened so strongly into it that my jaws would not move; I would have cried out, but the sound which reached beyond the fruit was only a muffled whisper. I felt that I was stifling, and began to limp to and fro, gesticulating like a madman, until I fell to the earth, with my eyes bursting out of my head.

At first the Bedouin was frightened at my behaviour, but when he discovered the cause of my torment, he came close and tried to free my jaws. His efforts only hurt me more and made the fruit stick closer, so he left me and began to pick up several fruits of the same kind, which lay under the trees. After a careful

consideration of them all, he chose one and threw away the others. "Look closely at this fruit, Hassan Abdalla," he said when he returned, "You will notice countless insects biting and undermining it. If we have patience, I think we may use these little creatures as a cure for your misfortune. I calculate that, if we place a good number of them upon the fruit which is stopping your mouth, they will free you at the latest in two or three days." As he was a man of experience, I let him set about the cure; but I could not help thinking: "Surely death were better than three days and nights of such a torment!"

My master sat beside me in the shade and, after satisfying himself that the insects had begun their work, drew dates and bread from the provision bag and started to eat. But he was good enough to interrupt himself from time to time, to urge patience on me, saying: "You see, O Hassan Abdalla, how your greed has interrupted my journey and postponed the execution of my plans. Yet, being a wise man, I do not worry over such a trifling accident. And there is no need for you to worry." Then he composed himself to sleep, advising me to do the same.

I passed that night and the next day in acute torture, for, over and above the pain of my foot and the pain of my jaws, I was racked by hunger and especially by thirst. To console me, the Bedouin would report the progress of the insects from time to time, and in some sort managed to keep me sane until the third day.

Early on the third morning I felt my jaws relax and, blessing the name of Allah, I hurled the rest of that evil fruit away.

My first care on becoming free was to rummage in the foodbag and shake the water-skin; but, during my

three days' fast, my master had emptied both. I wept and accused him sorely, but he answered sweetly and without anger: "Are you just, Hassan Abdalla? Would you have had me die of hunger and thirst? Put your trust in Allah, and search for some water stream."

I rose and limped about in search of water or some known fruit, but the fruit was all of that one evil kind. At last, however, I found a trickle of bright water flowing from a hollow rock and, going on my knees, drank and drank of it again.

With my thirst allayed, I consented to journey on, and, mounting my beast, followed the Bedouin, who was already far ahead on his red camel; but I had not gone a hundred paces before I felt so terrible a colic within me that the fire of hell seemed to be burning in my bowels. "O Allah, O my mother!" I cried, as I tried to moderate the speed of my camel, who was taking great swift strides to overtake its fellow. Its bumping and jumping caused me such great agony that I shrieked aloud and cursed the camel, myself, and all the world. At last my master heard me and, riding back, helped me to halt and stagger to the ground. At once I squatted on the sand, if the king of time will excuse the liberty, and gave free course to the impulsion of my bowels. I felt as if my guts were leaving me in thunder; even as I heard the Bedouin saying: "Be patient, O Hassan Abdalla," I fell forward in a dead faint.

I do not know how long I was unconscious; when I came to myself, it was evening and I was again mounted on the back of that detestable camel, following my companion across the desert. We halted at the foot of a high mountain behind which the sun was setting, and my master said to me: "I thank Allah

that we shall not fast tonight. Stay quietly here, for my knowledge of travel will enable me to find safe refreshment, where you, without doubt, would gather us some poisoned thing." He went up to a cluster of plants, whose broad and fleshy leaves were covered with sharp spines, and, after chopping some of them down with his sword, peeled away their outer covering with his knife, showing a sweet yellow flesh within. He gave me as much as I could eat and I was refreshed by the taste, which was of figs.

I began to forget my sufferings in the hope which I entertained of a night's quiet sleep; for I seemed to have forgotten the savour of it. At moonrise I stretched my camel's-hair mantle on the ground and was making ready to sleep, when the Bedouin said to me:

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-ninety-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"NOW IS YOUR chance to show me that you are really grateful; I wish you to climb up that mountain and wait on the summit for the sun's rising. As his rim appears, you must turn to the east and recite the morning prayer; after that you may come down. Be very careful not to let yourself be surprised by sleep, for the exhalations of that peak are deadly beyond belief and would undermine your health for ever."

In spite of my great weariness and many sufferings, I could not forget that the Bedouin had provided my

children with bread; so, though thinking the request a strange one and much against my will, I climbed painfully to the top of that mountain, bearing, with what fortitude I might, the agonies which I felt in my foot and belly at the least movement. The peak was white and bare, affording no shelter from the piercing wind which blew violently across it. I had no sooner reached the top than my accumulated weariness took hold of me and cast me to the ground, where I slept, in spite of myself, until morning.

When I woke and saw that the sun was just about to appear, I tried to rise to my feet, but only fell backwards without movement. My limbs had swollen to the size of an elephant's legs and were both painful and flabby, refusing to bear up the enormous weight of my belly, which had grown to the bigness of the largest water-skin. My head was like lead upon my shoulders and I could not move my arms.

Yet I made a superhuman effort, for fear of displeasing the Bedouin, and obliged my body to stand upright. Well-nigh swooning from the terrible pain, I turned to the east and recited the morning prayer. As I did so, the sun rose and threw the distended shadow of my unfortunate body away to the west.

As soon as my duty was done, I started to descend the mountain, but I was so feeble and the slope so great that my monstrous legs doubled under me at the first step. I began rolling, like a fast ball, down the sheer slope; the stones and brambles at which I clutched to save myself only tore away strips of flesh and clothing; after watering the whole of that mountain with my blood, I bounded out into the plain and lay groaning at my master's feet.

He leaned over the sand and was so engrossed in certain lines which he was tracing that he saw nothing

of the manner in which I had arrived and did not notice my presence until my prolonged moaning drew his attention. He cried over his shoulder without looking at me: "Let us praise Allah! You were born under a happy star and all our undertakings shall succeed. Thanks to your shadow, which I measured upon the plain, I have at last been able to discover something for which I have searched for many years."

"Come and help me to dig," he said without raising his head, "just here, where I have planted the point of my lance." But then, as I only answered with broken sobs, he turned towards me at last and, seeing me lying in a pitiful round mass upon the sand, ran towards me, crying: "O Hassan Abdalla, you have been very imprudent! You have slept upon the mountain and the evil vapours, passing into the blood, have poisoned all." This he said angrily, but afterwards, when he saw that my teeth were chattering with pain and consternation, he spoke more calmly: "But do not think that I am angry with you. Come, I will cure you." So saying, he drew a knife with a fine sharp blade from his belt and, before I could oppose the least resistance, stabbed me deeply in many places. Water flowed forth in abundance from the punctures which he had made in my belly and arms, my thighs and legs; I grew to be like an empty water-bag and my skin fluttered upon my bones like a second-hand garment too great for the wearer. Yet I felt a little relieved, and was able to drag myself to my feet and help my master in his digging.

We shovelled away the earth about the lance until we had uncovered a white marble tomb, whose cover the Bedouin lifted. Then we saw a flurry of human bones and a manuscript written in bright gold on the

purple-stained skin of a gazelle. You hold it in your hands, O king of time.

My master snatched the manuscript with trembling hands and, though it was written in an unknown tongue, began to read it with great attention. As he turned over page after page, his pale brow grew red with pleasure and his eyes began to sparkle joyously. At last he cried aloud: "Now I know the way to that mysterious city! O Hassan Abdalla, rejoice with me, for soon we shall enter Many-Columned Iram, where no human has set foot before; soon we shall hold the secret of that red sulphur which is the germ of all precious metals and the principle of all the riches of the world."

But the thought of further journeying filled me with terror, and I cried: "Excuse your slave, my lord! Though he rejoices with you, he has found that riches are not profitable to him, and would prefer to live in health and poverty at Cairo than drag all the miseries of his body to Many-Columned Iram." My master looked at me pitifully, and answered: "Poor fool, I labour as much for you as for myself." "That is true," I retorted, "but alas, it is always I who reap the unfortunate results of those labours."

Without paying any attention to my decision, the Bedouin gathered together an ample provision of the fig-tasting flesh of those plants which I have mentioned. Then he mounted his camel and I was obliged to do the same.

We skirted the flanks of the mountain and rode towards the west for three days and three nights until, on the fourth morning, we saw before us on the horizon something which glittered and threw back the sunlight as if it had been a mighty mirror. Drawing closer, we found that our way was barred by a river

of mercury, spanned only by a crystal bridge, with no handrail and so narrow, steep, and slippery that a man of sense would never have ventured his foot upon it.

But my master, without a moment's hesitation, dismounted and bade me also dismount. After unsaddling the camels that they might graze at ease, he drew two pairs of woollen slippers from his saddlebags and, covering his feet with one pair, told me to put on the other. He commanded me to follow him closely, without looking to right or left, and himself walked firmly on to the crystal bridge. I followed trembling, and we both came, more by Allah's mercy than by any confidence of mine, safely to the opposite bank.

We walked forward for some hours in silence and arrived at last at the entrance of a black valley, strewn with gigantic black rocks and horribly shaded by black trees. I saw vast serpents covered with black scales slipping to and fro among the black leaves; in my terror I turned to flee from that horrible place, but the black rocks were all about me like the sides of a well.

I fell to the earth weeping and cried to my master: "O son of excellence, why have you led me by a road of suffering to a vile death in this place? Alas, alas, I shall never see my children or their mother any more! Why did you lift me from the calm of my poverty? I was only a beggar upon the road of Allah but I sat at ease in the courts of the mosques and heard the noble words of the santons." "Be brave, be a man, Hassan Abdalla!" answered the Bedouin, without a trace of anger in his voice, "You are not going to die, and when you return to Cairo it will not be as a poor man, but as one richer than the king."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-ninety-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

So SAYING, MY master sat down on the ground and began turning the leaves of the manuscript with a moistened thumb, as calmly as if he were in his own harem. After reading for an hour, he raised his head and said: "O Hassan Abdalla, do you wish to leave this spot as quickly as possible?" "Most certainly I do!" I cried, "Tell me what feat I must perform, for pity's sake! Must I recite all the chapters of the Koran? Must I repeat all the names and sacred attributes of Allah? Must I make a vow to go on pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina ten years running? Speak, master; I am ready for all and more than all!"

The Bedouin gave me a kindly glance, and answered: "No, Hassan Abdalla, no, your task is much more easy: take this bow and this arrow, and walk about the valley until you see a vast serpent with black horns. As you are a skilful shot, you should have no difficulty in killing him. When you have done so, you must bring me his head and heart; then you will have done your share." "Aie, aie!" I cried, "Do you call that easy? Why do you not do it yourself? I tell you I would rather lie as I am and perish as I lie." But the Bedouin laid his hand on my shoulder, saying: "Hassan Abdalla, have you forgotten your wife's garment and your children's bread?" So I burst into tears and, taking the bow and arrow in my trembling hands, walked towards the black rocks, in

and out of which serpents of the same colour writhed in terrifying knots. It was not long before I found my prey; when I beheld a snake vaster than the rest and bearing horns upon its hideous head, I called on the name of Allah and let fly my arrow. The serpent bounded under the wound, lashing its body like a monstrous whip, until it fell motionless all along the ground. When I was sure that it had died, I cut its head off with my knife and, slitting up the belly, removed its heart.

I carried these things back to my master, who took them from me with an affable smile, saying: "Now help me to make a fire." I collected dry grass and small branches until the pile was large enough; then the Bedouin took a diamond from his pocket and, turning it to the sun, darted a reflected ray on to the dry wood, so that it kindled.

Then he drew from beneath his robe a small iron vessel and a tube cut from a single ruby. "You see this ruby phial, Hassan Abdalla," he said, "but the content is unknown to you. It is the blood of the Phoenix." He uncorked the tube and, after pouring the liquid into the iron vessel, added the heart and brain of the serpent. Finally he set the iron vessel on the fire and, opening the manuscript which you hold, O king of time, read unintelligible words over the brew.

Suddenly my master rose to his feet, bared his shoulders as do pilgrims when they leave Mecca, and, dipping the corner of his belt in the mixture on the fire, ordered me to rub his back with it. I obeyed him and saw the skin of the shoulders swelling and breaking as I rubbed, and a pair of wings grow forth and increase in size until they trailed upon the ground. The Bedouin began to beat these wings with greater

and greater strength till he shot up into the air; but I, who would have died a thousand deaths rather than be left alone in those sinister places, jumped after him and clung mightily to the skirts of his robe, so that I was carried from that black valley and soared with him above the clouds.

I cannot say how long we flew, my lord, but I know that we found ourselves at length above a mighty plain, bounded at the further end by a wall of blue crystal. The sand of this plain was powdered gold, the pebbles were bright gems, and in its midst rose a city filled with palaces and gardens.

“Behold, Many-Columned Iram!” cried my master and, ceasing the oarage of his wings, let us sink gently to earth beneath the walls of the city of Shaddad, son of Ad. At once the wings grew small and disappeared.

The walls of that city were made of alternate gold and silver blocks, and seven gates opened in them like the gates of Paradise. The first was of ruby, the second of emerald, the third of agate, the fourth of coral, the fifth of jasper, the sixth of silver, and the seventh of gold.

We entered by the gate of gold, and as we advanced, called upon the name of Allah. We passed through streets bordered by palaces with colonnades of alabaster, and by gardens where the air was milk and the streams ran flower-water. In this way we came to a palace which dominated the city from its centre and was built with a breadth and art which cannot be described. Its terraces were held up on a thousand columns of red gold, and had balustrades of coloured crystal and walls starred with emeralds and sapphires. In the middle of this palace blossomed the glory of an enchanted garden, whose earth was scented with musk

and whose flowers were watered by three rivers: one of clear wine, one of rose essence, and one of honey. In the garden's centre stood a pavilion where a throne of gold and ruby was shaded by a vault smoothed from a single emerald. And upon that throne stood the small gold box which you now hold, my lord.

The Bedouin took the box and opened it. Finding it full of a red powder, he cried: "See, see, O Hassan Abdalla! Here is the red sulphur, the Kimia of the sages and philosophers, which they have given their lives in vain to find!" "Throw away the dirty stuff, good master," said I, "and let us fill the box with those precious stones which lie in heaps about the palace." "Poor fool," he answered with compassion, "this powder is the very soul of riches. A single grain of it can transmute the vilest metal into gold! O child of ignorance, it is red sulphur, it is the Kimia! With this powder I could build a mightier palace and raise a more magnificent city even than these; I could buy the lives of men and the conscience of the pure; I could seduce virtue herself and make myself a king's son, born of kings." "And could you add a day to your life with the powder, master?" I asked, "Or efface a single hour of the past?" But he answered: "Allah alone is great!"

As I had no great faith in this red sulphur, I preferred to pick up great handfuls of pearls and precious stones. I had already filled my belt and pockets and turban, when the Bedouin cried: "What are you doing, O earthly imbecile? If we take a single stone out of this palace, we shall be stricken with instant death." He strode swiftly forth, carrying the box with him, and I was regretfully compelled to empty my pockets, my belt, and my turban, and follow him, though not without many a backward glance at those

winking glittering multitudes. When I caught up with my master, he took me by the hand and led me quickly from the city by the ruby gate, lest I should be tempted to possess myself of some trifle if I walked alone.

Turning our backs on those marvellous walls, we walked straight forward to the horizon of blue crystal, which opened to let us pass. When we reached the other side, we turned for a last look at the Many-Columned city of Iram, but city and plain alike had disappeared, and we found ourselves on the bank of the river of mercury.

We crossed by the crystal bridge and came upon our camels grazing quietly where we had left them. I must confess that I approached mine as eagerly as I would have approached an old friend of my youth. After tightening the girths of our saddles, we mounted; and, when my master said: "Now let us return to Egypt," I lifted up my arms and gave thanks to Allah.

Yet, O king of time, the gold and silver keys were still in my belt and I did not know that they were the keys of misery and suffering.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-ninety-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

MISERY, PRIVATION AND ill-health dogged our footsteps to Cairo; but, for a reason of which I was still ignorant, these things made head against me only, while my master went his way calmly, blossoming like

a flower after the rain and seeming to take on an added prosperity from my griefs. He passed through peril and weariness with a smile and walked in life as upon a silken carpet.

My first care when I came to Cairo was to run to my own house; but I found none to receive me, neither mother, wife, nor children; the door was broken and open, and wandering dogs had made their home within. Hearing my cries of despair, a neighbour opened his door, saying: "O Hassan Abdalla, may your span be lengthened by the days which these have lost! All your household is dead."

I swooned over my threshold and only came to myself to find my master, the Bedouin, sprinkling my face with rose-water. I fought down my sobs, and at last gave full rein to my indignation, cursing my companion and accusing him of all my sorrows. He listened in silence and then touched me on the shoulder, saying kindly: "We come from Allah and to Allah we return at last!" Then he took me by the hand and led me from that desolate house.

He brought me to a magnificent palace on the banks of the Nile and constrained me to live there with him. Seeing that nothing would draw me from my misery, he wished to divide all his riches with me and even carried generosity so far as to teach me the hidden sciences and educate me in alchemy and the deciphering of cabalistic books. He would often bring quintals of lead into my presence and transmute them into the purest gold, by means of the red sulphur which we had brought back with us.

But though I lived in the midst of treasures and the luxury of my master's daily feasts, I remained racked in body and soul; a time came when I could not support the weight or contact of the rich garments and

precious stuffs which were thrust upon me, and had no taste for the delicate meats and chosen wines which were set before me. Sleep would not come to me on purple couches and beds of scented wood. The gardens of our palace were refreshed by the Nile breezes and planted with rare trees fetched at great cost from India, Persia, China, and the Isles. Cunning machines raised the water of the river and caused it to tumble in refreshing spray among basins of marble and porphyry; but my heart cared for none of these things, since a poison worked in my flesh and upon my soul.

But my master's days passed in the breast of pleasure, and his nights were an anticipation of Paradise. He lived in a pavilion of dark silk branched with gold, where the light was as soft as moonlight. It stood among orange trees and lemon trees, wading fruit-deep among jasmin and roses. Each night he entertained new friends with kingly magnificence, and, when their hearts and senses were prepared for lust by exquisite wines and sighing music, caused a procession of girls, bought for their weight in gold in the markets of Egypt, Persia, and Syria, to walk in single file before them. When one of the guests cast the eyes of desire upon a girl, the Bedouin would take her by the hand and lead her to him, saying: "My lord, you will greatly oblige me by taking this slave to your house when you depart." All who came near him were his friends, and he was known throughout the city as the Magnificent.

He would often visit me in my solitary suffering, and one day he came unexpectedly, bringing a new girl with him. His face was lighted by drunkenness and joy, his eyes gleamed with an extraordinary fire of exaltation. He sat quite close to me, taking the young girl on his knees, and said: "O Hassan Ab-

dalla, you have never heard me sing. I am going to sing now." He took me by the hand and began to sing in an ecstatic voice, wagging his head to and fro the while:

*I am red wise
For wine is more than roses,
Water's for prayers;
Your cheeks run wine,
My soul reels and runs crimson wisdom.
Here are only the orange trees
Drinking the wind;
Drink first, and scent my cup.
Here is only my heart beating
And the opening of roses;
Sing wicked and wanton,
Here are but nightingales.
Though you undress
The moon and her lascivious little girls
Have seen before,
Though I kiss the points of your breasts,
The jasmin is accustomed,
The rose has seen before.
Lie naked,
Veiling your eyes in hair,
O jealousy of God.*

When he had made an end of this song, my master gave a great sigh of happiness and, leaning his head upon his breast, seemed to sleep. The girl slipped from his arms, fearing to trouble his repose, and glided from my presence. I went to cover my companion and prop his head with a cushion; but I saw that he had ceased to breathe. I leaned anxiously

over him, and discovered that he had died smiling at life, like those who are born under a happy star. Allah be good to him!

I forgot the misery of all the days since I had met him and remembered only his serene benevolence; I wept and made preparation for a worthy funeral. I washed the body myself in scented water, I closed all the natural openings of the body with perfumed cotton, I depilated the dead and carefully combed his beard, I dyed his brows, blackened his lids, and shaved his head. Then I wound him in a tissue which had been woven for a Persian king and set him in a coffin of aloe wood overlaid with gold.

I called together my master's many friends and bade fifty of the slaves carry the coffin turn by turn. The procession started forth, interspersed with paid weepers uttering plaintive cries and waving their handkerchiefs above their heads, and preceded by readers of the Koran chanting the sacred verses, to which the crowd about our way gave the response: "There is no God but Allah and Muhamad is the Prophet of Allah!" A multitude of the Faithful pressed forward to help in the bearing of the coffin, if only by touching with their fingers, and we buried him among the lamentation of a whole people. I caused a flock of sheep and a herd of young camels to be slaughtered upon his tomb.

When I had finished my last duties to my master by presiding over his funeral feast, I shut myself in the palace and began to put my companion's affairs in order. I opened the gold box and found that only a little of the red sulphur remained (the amount which is now before you, O king of time); the rest had been spent to satisfy the Bedouin's unheard-of prodigality. But, as the rest was enough to render its owner more

powerful than any king and as I cared nothing for riches, I did not concern myself about the waste of the powder. Instead, being anxious to learn the contents of the mysterious manuscript which my master, while teaching me to decipher written characters, had never let me read, I opened the sheets of gazelle skin and eagerly devoured their contents. I learnt for the first time, among other marvels which I will tell you some day, the powers of the keys of destiny, and understood that the Bedouin had only bought me in order that I should take upon myself the evil influence of the gold and silver keys. I had to call all the noble thoughts of the Prophet to my aid (prayer and peace be upon him!) to prevent myself cursing my master and going forth to spit upon his tomb.

I swore to be rid of the fatal keys for ever; so I snatched them from my belt and set them in a crucible upon the fire, until they should be resolved and fume away. While the vessel was heating I searched everywhere for the other two keys, of wisdom and of happiness; but I could find them nowhere. I therefore returned to my crucible and stood watching the fusion of the silver and gold.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-ninety-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHILE I WATCHED, as I thought, my evil luck melting away before my eyes, the pavilion was suddenly invaded by the khalifat's guards, who bound me and carried me into the presence of their master.

The sultan Thaylun, your father, my lord, told me angrily that he was aware that I had the secret of alchemy and that I must at once reveal it to him; but, fearing that an unjust ruler would use such knowledge for the hurt of his people, I refused to speak. Your father therefore had me loaded with chains and thrown into the darkest of his dungeons. He sacked our palace and destroyed it, after taking away the gold box with its manuscript and the rest of the red sulphur. Also he had me tortured every day, hoping that I would speak. But Allah gave me fortitude, and I spoke not. Instead I dragged out the long years of my destiny, hoping for death to strike off my chains and unlock the door of liberty.

But now, my lord, I shall die contented, because my persecutor has gone to render an account to Allah, and the most just and glorious of kings reigns in his stead.

Sultan Muhamad rose from his throne and embraced the venerable Hassan Abdalla, crying: "Glory be to Allah who has allowed his servant to repair an injustice!" He appointed Hassan to be his grand-wazir and put his own royal mantle upon him; then he placed him in the care of the wisest doctors of his kingdom that they might cure him of his many ills. Also he ordered the most expert of the palace scribes to write down this tale in letters of gold and place it among the archives of his reign.

As the sultan Muhamad fully believed in the virtue of the red sulphur, he melted a thousand quintals of lead in vast earthenware crucibles and mingled the remaining powder with them, while crying the magic words which Hassan Abdalla read to him out of the manuscript.

The lead immediately turned to pure gold, and the sultan, not wishing to spend it upon things perishable, set it aside for a labour pleasing to Allah. He dreamed of a mosque which should be without equal in the land of the Faithful and, calling the most famous architects of his empire, bade them trace out the plans of his dream, without thought of cost or difficulty. So the architects drew an immense square, each side facing one chief point of the compass, at the foot of the hill which overlooks that city. In each corner a well-proportioned tower was set, having a gallery and dome of gold; and each side of the mosque was lifted upon a thousand pillars, bearing strong arches of admirable curves which roofed a terrace whose balustrade was of marvellously fretted gold. From the centre of the building rose a mighty cupola, of such airy construction that it seemed to float without support between heaven and earth. It was worked inside with azure enamel and pounced with stars of gold. The floors of the mosque were far fetched marble and the walls were a mosaic of jasper, porphyry, and agate. The pillars and arches were deep cut and painted in pure colour with interlacing verses of the Koran; and, that this marvel of time need have no fear of fire, no wood at all was used in the building of it. Seven years, seven thousand men, and seven thousand quintals of golden dinars went to the achievement of this mosque, and it is called the Mosque of Sultan Muhamad bin Thaylun to this day.

The venerable Hassan Abdalla soon recovered his health and lived honoured and respected to the age of one hundred and twenty years, which had been marked for him by Destiny. But Allah knows all! He alone lives, for He dies not!

Shahrazade fell silent and King Shahryar said:

“No man may escape his destiny. But, O Shahrazade, this tale has made me sad.” “It is for that very reason,” answered Shahrazade, “that I am about to tell you the tale of the Everlasting Slippers, taken from the Diwan of Easy Jest and Laughing Wisdom by the sheikh Magid-Eddin Abu Tahir Muhamad. Allah be good to him!”

And Shahrazade said:

THE DIWAN OF EASY JESTS
AND LAUGHING WISDOM

THE EVERLASTING SLIPPERS

IT IS RELATED that there was once in Cairo a druggist named Abu Kassim, who was celebrated for his avarice. Though Allah granted him riches and prosperity in his trade, he lived and dressed like the poorest beggar; his garments were a vast collection of rents and scraps; his turban was so old and dirty that it was impossible to tell its original colour; but, of all he wore, his slippers were the most notorious witnesses of his meanness. They were not only studded with great nails and armoured like a machine of war, and had soles mended a thousand times until they were as thick as the head of hippopotamus, but their uppers were so patched that for twenty years one of the chief labours of the cleverest cobblers and curriers in Cairo had been to keep their component rubbish from disintegrating. Abu Kassim's slippers were so heavy that they had become proverbial throughout all Egypt. When a guest stayed too long, they would say of him: “His manners are as heavy as Abu Kassim's slippers.” When a pedantic schoolmaster tried to be funny, they would say of him: “His wit is as heavy

as Abu Kassim's slippers." Porters would sigh, and say of their load: "It is as heavy as Abu Kassim's slippers." When a nasty old woman in a harem would stop her master's wives from playing together, they would say: "She is as heavy as Abu Kassim's slippers." When a man ate indigestible food and felt a tempest rising in his belly, he would say: "Allah preserve me, that meat was as heavy as Abu Kassim's slippers!" In fact, folk would drag in Abu Kassim's slippers in a thousand connections, when heaviness was in question.

One day Abu Kassim made an unusually good bargain in his business but, instead of giving some little feast as merchants do when Allah had particularly favoured them, he determined, by way of celebration, to visit the hammam, where he had not set his foot in the memory of man. He shut his shop and set forth, carrying his slippers on his back to save their use; when he arrived at the hammam, he left them on the threshold with all the other footgear, and entered to take his bath.

Abu Kassim's skin was so penetrated with filth that the rubbers were a long time in completing their labours upon him, and it was not until sunset that he was ready to depart. When he went forth, he discovered that his slippers were missing and that an exquisite pair in citron yellow leather stood in their place. "Allah must have known that I have often thought of buying a pair like this," said Abu Kassim to himself, "or perhaps someone has exchanged with me by accident." Delighted at this saving of expense, he put on the yellow slippers and departed.

As a matter of fact, the yellow slippers belonged to the kadi, who was still in the hammam. Also, the slipper guard had found Abu Kassim's monstrosities,

fuming and stinking on the threshold, and had hidden them in an odd corner. Then, as his duties were over for the day, he had returned home, without thinking of replacing them.

When the kadi had finished his bath, the obsequious attendants searched everywhere for his slippers, but could only find Abu Kassim's fabulous footwear, which they instantly recognised. They set out in pursuit and brought him back to the hammam, with the missing property hanging about his neck. The kadi exchanged slippers with Abu Kassim and sent him to prison, where he was obliged to pay the officers an enormous bribe before he could go free.

As soon as he returned to his shop, he cursed his luckless slippers and threw them into the Nile, to get rid of them.

A few days afterwards, certain fishermen with great difficulty pulled their nets to shore and found them laden with Abu Kassim's slippers, the nails of which had seriously damaged the mesh. They ran to Abu Kassim's shop and violently threw the slippers inside, with a curse for their unlucky owner. The slippers knocked down a quantity of flasks of rare essences, and smashed each into a thousand pieces.

The grief of Abu Kassim knew no bounds, and he cried: "Ill-omened slippers, accursed things of evil, you shall do me no more harm!" So he went out into the garden and began to dig a hole in which to bury them; but one of his neighbours, who had a grudge against him, ran to the wali and informed him that Abu Kassim had dug up a hidden treasure in his garden, without reporting it. The wali believed this, as it chimed with his knowledge of Abu Kassim; so he sent for the unfortunate druggist and, in spite of

the poor man's oath that he was only burying his slippers, made him disgorge a large sum of money.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-ninety-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ABU KASSIM TORE his beard in despair and walked with his slippers far into the country, meaning to see the last of them at all costs. After walking for many hours, he threw them into a canal and returned home, supposing that he would never hear of them again. But, as ill luck would have it, the current of the water carried the slippers down to a mill, which was served by the canal, and they violently stopped its workings by being caught in the wheels. The owners of the mill ran to repair the damage and found two enormous objects caught in the gears, which they instantly recognised as Abu Kassim's slippers.

At their instigation the druggist was heavily fined, to make good the damage, and again thrown into prison. He came forth after richly bribing the officers; and his slippers were returned to him at the gates.

He walked home in a state bordering upon madness and, placing the slippers behind him on the terrace so that he might not see them, leaned on the balustrade and began to consider deeply what he should do with them. While he was cogitating, a dog belonging to one of the neighbours saw the slippers and, leaping from his own terrace on to that of Abu Kassim, took one of them in his jaws and began to play with it. In the

course of casting it to and fro the wretched animal sent it flying over the balustrade, and it fell upon the head of an old woman who was passing below. Its enormous weight crushed the old woman flat, as if she had been made of paper, and her relations, recognising Abu Kassim's slipper, appeared before the kadi, demanding either the price of the victim's blood or the death of Abu Kassim. The poor druggist was obliged to pay the full sum demanded by law, and also to give a monstrous bribe to the police in order to escape being sent to prison for a third time.

This last calamity taught him what to do; he went home, took up the fatal slippers and returned to the kadi. When he was in the presence, he lifted the slippers above his head, and cried so violently that the kadi could not forbear to smile: "Behold, my lord, the cause of all my tribulations! Because of them I shall henceforward have to beg my bread. Therefore I entreat you to make a formal announcement that Abu Kassim no longer owns any slippers and is not responsible for anything which any slippers may do in the future." So saying, he hurled the slippers into the middle of the hall and ran forth barefooted, leaving all who were in that court fallen upon their backsides and shaking with laughter. But Allah knows all!

And Shahrazade said again:

BAHLUL THE JESTER

IT IS RELATED that the khalifat Haroun Al-Rachid kept a jester in his palace to divert his moments of dark humour. This jester was called Bahlul the Wise. One day the khalifat asked him: "O Bahlul, do you know how many fools there are in Baghdad?"

"It would be a long list, my lord," answered Bahlul. "Yet I bid you make it and make it exactly," cried Haroun. Bahlul gave a long laugh, and then replied: "As I have no taste for heavy work, I will make you out a list of all the wise men in Baghdad. Those who do not appear upon it will be the fools."

This same Bahlul climbed up on to the khalifat's throne one day during his absence and received a volley of blows from the officers for his temerity. The sultan came upon him weeping hot tears and tried to console him. But Bahlul said: "O Commander of the Faithful, I do not weep for myself; I grieve because I have calculated how many blows wait you downstairs."

Bahlul was wise enough to have a horror of marriage; so Haroun, being one day angry with him, married him without his consent to a very beautiful slave. But Bahlul had hardly lain down by his wife's side for a moment on the first night before he leapt to his feet and fled from the room. While he was rushing like a madman about the palace, the khalifat came to him, and said severely: "Vile fellow, why have you offended against the wife I gave you?" "My lord, there is no remedy for terror," answered the jester, "I have no fault to find with the bride of your generosity, for she is beautiful and modest; but as soon as I lay beside her, I distinctly heard voices speaking from the deep of her breast. One asked me for a robe, another for a silk veil, a third for slippers, and a fourth for an embroidered belt. So I took fright and fled, in spite of your orders and the maiden's charms, fearing if I stayed to become more foolish and unhappy even than I am."

This same Bahlul refused a present of a thousand dinars which the khalifat offered twice; so Haroun

asked him the reason of his disinterestedness. For sole answer, Bahlul stretched out his legs in the khalifat's face. Seeing this supreme mark of incivility, the chief eunuch would have taken the jester up and beaten him; but Al-Rachid forbade him, and questioned Bahlul concerning his great lack of respect. "My lord," answered the jester, "if I had stretched out my hand to receive your present I would have forfeited the right to stretch out my legs."

One day, as Al-Rachid was returning from a war-like expedition, Bahlul entered his tent and found the khalifat parched with thirst and calling for water. The jester hastened to fetch a cup of water and gave it to him, saying: "O Commander of the Faithful, before you drink pray tell me how much you would have given for this cup of water if it had been difficult to procure." "I would have given half my kingdom," answered Al-Rachid as he drank. "And now that you have drunk," went on Bahlul, "supposing this cup of water refused to leave your body, owing to some retention on the part of your honourable bladder, what would you pay to see it safely forth?" "Surely half of my kingdom," answered Al-Rachid; then said Bahlul: "I suppose, my lord, that an empire which could be bought for a cup of water and its natural voidance is worth these cares and bloody wars? . . ." Al-Rachid wept.

And Shahrazade said again:

THE INVITATION TO UNIVERSAL PEACE

IT IS RELATED that the venerable sheikh of a village had a fair courtyard on his farm, well stocked with

poultry who gave him excellent eggs and plump pullets for the table. Among the males in this courtyard there was a certain great and wonderful cock with a ringing voice and golden plumage, who possessed, in addition to his fair exterior, the virtues of vigilance, wisdom, and knowledge of the world. He was both just and attentive to his wives, fulfilling his duty towards them with zeal and impartiality, so that they did not know the meaning of jealousy or angry looks. Because he was both powerful and benevolent he was cited as a model for husbands among all the dwellers of the courtyard; and his master called him Voice-of-Dawn.

One day, while his wives were looking after their children and arranging their feathers, Voice-of-Dawn went for a visit about the farm. As he walked, he marvelled at all he saw and pecked industriously at any grains of corn, barley, maize, or sesame which lay upon the ground. The train of these delicacies led him on, until he found himself beyond the farm and beyond the village, isolated in a savage spot which he had never seen before. He looked to left and right for some familiar face, but could see none; so he became anxious and gave vent to one or two unquiet cries. While he was glancing about to be sure of his way home, he beheld a Fox running towards him with great strides. Trembling for his life, he turned tail and dashed forward with extended wings until he was able to flap to the summit of a ruined wall, where there was just room for him to perch and which the Fox would certainly not be able to climb.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-ninety-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SOON THE FOX stood yapping and snuffing at the foot of the wall. When he found that he could in no way reach the bird of his desire, he lifted up his head, saying: "Peace be upon you, O face of good-omen! Peace be upon you, my brother, my charming companion!" Voice-of-Dawn would not look down at him or answer his greeting, so the Fox continued: "My tender and beautiful friend, why will you not greet or glance at one who brings you great good news?" The Cock made no sign that he had heard this courtesy, and the Fox went on: "My brother, if you only knew the excellent news which I have been instructed to give you, you would descend in great haste to embrace me and kiss me upon the mouth!" But the Cock feigned to be distracted and fixed round eyes upon something afar off. "Know then, my brother," continued the Fox, "that our lord the lion, who is sultan of the beasts and our lord the eagle, who is sultan of the birds, recently met together in a green meadowland, rich in watercourses and wild flowers, and called together representatives of us all. When tigers, hyenas, leopards, lynxes, panthers, jackals, antelopes, wolves, hares, cats, vultures, hawks, crows, pigeons, doves, quails, partridges, and domestic fowl had come together before them our two monarchs solemnly decreed that henceforth safety, peace, and brotherly love should reign supreme over the whole habitable earth; that a comradeship in sympathy should be the only motive in the lives of savage beasts, domestic animals, and birds; that old enmities and racial hatreds should

be forgotten, and that all should bend their efforts to the general and individual good. They also proclaimed that whosoever should prove recalcitrant must be brought before them for summary condemnation. They made me their herald and bade me proclaim their decision about the earth, giving me power to report the names of those who were not instantly obedient. That is why you see me at the foot of this wall, dear brother; for I, I myself and no other, am the representative, the commissioner, the herald, the officer of those great lords. So now you may readily understand why I wished you peace and offered you friendship, sweet acquaintance."

But the Cock seemed not to hear; he regarded the horizon with round, vague, winking eyes, and wavered his head from time to time. The Fox, who panted to feel his teeth sink in deliciously, went on: "My brother, why do you not honour me with an answer or one little word? Will you not deign even to cast your charming eye at a representative of our lord the lion and our lord the eagle? I must remind you that, if you keep this contumacious silence, I shall be obliged to report you to the council. I have very little hope that you would escape with your life under the new law, for our masters have determined to establish universal peace, even if they have to destroy half the animals and half the birds in doing so. My charming brother, I beg you, for the last time, to tell me why you will not answer."

The Cock, who until then had remained isled in haughty indifference, stretched out his neck and turned it slightly, so that his right eye looked down upon the Fox. "In truth, my brother," he said, "your words are upon my head and before my eyes. I honour you from the bottom of my heart, as the mes-

senger and representative of our lord the eagle. Though I did not answer, I assure you I had no thought of rebellion. No, no, I kept silence because I was troubled by a thing which I see far off across the plain." "And what do you see far off upon the plain?" exclaimed the Fox, "I trust that it is nothing serious, nothing calamitous?" The Cock stretched his neck further, as he answered: "Surely you see it, my brother? Allah has set piercing eyes upon each side of your nose; though it is true that they are somewhat bleared, if I may say so without giving the least offence." "But tell me what you see," cried the Fox in some alarm, "My eyes pain me a trifle today; though, if I may say so without running the least risk of seeming to contradict you, they are not, and never have been, bleared." "If you must know," replied Voice-of-Dawn, "I see a cloud of dust and several hunting hawks turning in the air above it." "Is that all you see, O visage of good-omen?" asked the anxious Fox, "Are you sure you see nothing running along the ground?" The Cock looked long before replying: "I certainly seem to see something running on four legs, high on its feet, long and slim, with a pointed head and drooping ears. Yes, it is coming towards us at some speed." The Fox trembled, as he asked again: "Are you sure it is not a greyhound, my brother? Allah protect us all!" "I do not know whether it is a greyhound or not," answered the Cock, "Allah alone could tell; I have never seen the kind. But it is a large quick dog of some sort, my handsome brother."

"I am afraid that I must take leave of you, dear friend," cried the Fox, as he turned and gave his bushy tail to the wind. "Wait, wait, brother!" the Cock called after him, "I am getting down; why do

you not wait?" "Because I have a strange antipathy to greyhounds," answered the Fox over his shoulder. "But, O visage of blessing," cried the Cock, "did you not tell me just now that you walked as a messenger of universal peace?" The Fox's answer came back from far away: "You are right, good brother, you are right; but that pimp of a greyhound—God's curse upon him!—never came to the congress, did not send a representative, and is not mentioned in the proclamation. Allah preserve you in good health, dear Cock, till I return!"

Thus the Cock escaped, thanks to his wit and wisdom. Jumping down from the wall, he returned in good case to the courtyard, glorifying Allah as he came. He lost no time in telling his wives and neighbours of the excellent trick he had played upon their hereditary foe, and all the cocks in the courtyard crowded joyously to celebrate his triumph.

And Shahrazade said again:

THE TALE OF THE TIED POINTS

IT IS RELATED that a certain king was once sitting on his throne and giving audience to his subjects, when an old farmer entered, carrying a basket on his head, and laid it before the throne. "What is in your basket, O sheikh?" asked the king, and the farmer answered: "Fresh fruit and vegetables, my year's first yield, which I have brought as a loyal present to my sultan." "They are accepted!" exclaimed the king, as he lifted the green leaves which protected the contents of the basket from the evil eye, and found an excellent collection of crisp cucumbers, tender gumboes, bananas, artichokes, lemons, and other early fruits and vegetables. He picked out a crisp cucumber

and began to crunch it, calling upon Allah's name. Then he sent his eunuchs to the harem with the rest of the gift. The women took their choice, congratulating each other, and saying: "May the first fruits of next year find us in life and beauty still!" They gave what was left in the basket to the slaves, and sent a hundred dinars back by the eunuchs. The king, being delighted by his cucumber, added another two hundred dinars. And this was not all which came to that farmer from his fortunate present. For the king questioned him about agriculture and other matters, and the farmer answered with wit and knowledge, in eloquent speech and chosen gesture, so that the king desired to make a companion of him, and asked: "Do you know how to keep company with kings?" "I do," answered the fellah. "Very well, then," commanded the king, "take the dinars to your family and return as quickly as possible."

The fellah carried the three hundred dinars to his wife and rejoined the king, just as he was sitting down to the evening meal. The sultan gave him a place beside himself, and made him eat and drink to the limit of his capacity. Delighting in his conversation more and more, he cried: "Surely you know some charming tales?" "As Allah lives, I know many charming tales," answered the farmer, "Tomorrow night I will tell you one." The king rejoiced and, wishing to reward his new-found favourite in advance, made him a present of the youngest and most beautiful girl in the queen's train. She was an untouched virgin, and the king had set her aside for his own delectation on some special night; but now he gave the two a fair apartment near his own, richly furnished with all the necessities of love, and bade them a sweet night.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-ninety-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE GIRL UNDRESSED and waited respectfully until her lord, who had never known such a beautiful girl, gave thanks to the Creator of women and began the usual foolish games which are played on such an occasion. But, to his great embarrassment and confusion, desire had fled the farmer's heart nor admonitions, coaxings, pleadings, prayers or cursings could lure it back again. He felt chagrined and mortified at this state of affairs while the girl was both vexed and amused. Finally, to hide his shame, he cried: "This is a prodigy; a most remarkable prodigy!" "As for me," replied the girl, "I leave the affair to Allah!" Then she asked the farmer if he knew of any reason why he should be as he was and, when he answered that he did not know, she said: "I will tell you; some one has cast a spell on you." "Is there any way of removing this?" questioned the farmer anxiously. "Leave it to me," replied the girl.

She fetched male incense and, burning it in a brazier, fumigated her lord with great gravity, as mourners fumigate the bodies of the dead. "Allah grant his resuscitation to he who sleeps enchanted!" she cried. Then she washed the torso of her lord with rose-water, as the dead are washed, and covered him with a silk napkin by way of winding-sheet. As soon as the rites of burial were completed, she called in all the slaves, whom the sultan had told off to wait upon her,

and showed them the farmer's luckless heir lying in its shroud among a mist of incense. The women broke into delighted cries and trills of laughter; then they turned tail and ran throughout the palace, telling all they met of this most solemn sight.

Next morning the sultan, who had risen earlier than his wont, sought out the farmer and asked after his night. The fellah answered with the whole truth, and the sultan fell over on his backside in a gust of laughter. "A clever girl, a fine girl," he cried, "I will take her back for my own use." He called the girl into his presence and made her tell the whole story again. When she had done so, without the omission of a single detail, the king roared with laughter for the second time and, turning to the fellah, asked: "Are you sure it is true?" The farmer lowered his eyes and nodded his head; but the king, staggering where he stood, cried out: "Now you must tell me all over again, from your point of view." The unfortunate man repeated the tale in all its wealth of incident. "As Allah lives, it is a prodigy!" exclaimed the sultan as, he wept for joy. When the two men had answered the call to prayer, the sultan said: "Now, O delightful companion, I pray you begin one of those tales which you promised me, that my pleasure may be complete on this blessed day." "Willingly," replied the farmer, as he sat down cross-legged before the sultan, and began:

THE TALE OF THE TWO HASHISH EATERS

THERE WAS ONCE, my lord and crown upon my head, a man in a certain city, who was a fisherman by trade

and a hashish eater by occupation. When he had earned his daily wage, he would spend a little of it on food and the rest on a sufficiency of that hilarious herb. He took his hashish three times a day: once in the morning on an empty stomach, once at noon, and once at sundown. Thus he was never lacking in extravagant gaiety. Yet he worked hard enough at his fishing; though sometimes in a very extraordinary fashion. On a certain evening, for instance, when he had taken a larger dose of his favourite drug than usual, he lit a tallow candle and sat in front of it, asking himself eager questions and answering with obliging wit. After some hours of this delight, he became aware of the cool silence of the night about him and the clear light of a full moon above his head, and exclaimed affably to himself: "Dear friend, the silent streets and the cool of the moon invite us to a walk. Let us go forth, while all the world is in bed and none may mar our solitary exaltation." Speaking in this way to himself, the fisherman left his house and began to walk towards the river; but as he went, he saw the light of the full moon lying in the roadway and took it to be the water of the river. "My dear old friend the fisherman," he said, "get your line and take the best of the fishing, while your rivals are indoors." So he ran back and fetched his hook and line, and cast into the glittering patch of moonlight on the road.

Soon an enormous dog, tempted by the smell of the bait, swallowed the hook greedily and then, feeling the barb, made desperate efforts to get loose. The fisherman struggled for some time against this enormous fish, but at last he was pulled over and rolled into the moonlight. Even then he would not let go his line, but held on grimly, uttering fright-

ened cries. "Help, help, good Mussulmans!" he shouted, "Help me to secure this mighty fish, for he is dragging me into the deeps! Help, help, good friends, for I am drowning!" The guards of that quarter ran up at the noise and began laughing at the fisherman's antics; but when he yelled: "Allah curse you, O sons of bitches! Is it a time to laugh when I am drowning?" they grew angry and, after giving him a sound beating, dragged him into the presence of the kadi.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-ninety-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ALLAH HAD WILLED that the kadi should also be addicted to the use of hashish; recognising that the prisoner was under that jocund influence, he rated the guards soundly and dismissed them. Then he handed over the fisherman to his slaves that they might give him a bed for calm sleep.

After a pleasant night and a day given up to the consumption of excellent food, the fisherman was called to the kadi in the evening and received by him like a brother. His host supped with him; and then the two sat opposite the lighted candles and each swallowed enough hashish to destroy a hundred-year-old elephant. When the drug exalted their natural dispositions, they undressed completely and began to dance about, singing and committing a thousand extravagances.

Now it happened that the sultan and his wazir were

walking through the city, disguised as merchants, and heard a strange noise rising from the kadi's house. They entered through the unlatched door and found two naked men, who stopped dancing at their entrance and welcomed them without the least embarrassment. The sultan sat down to watch his venerable kadi dance again; but when he saw that the other man had a profusion of dark and curly hair so thick that the eye could not penetrate it, he whispered softly in his wazir's startled ear: "As Allah lives, our kadi is not so well covered as his guest!" "What are you whispering about?" cried the fisherman, "I am the sultan of this city and I order you to watch my dance respectfully, otherwise I will have your head cut off. I am the sultan, this is my wazir; I hold the whole world like a fish in the palm of my right hand." The sultan and his wazir realised that they were in the presence of two hashish eaters; and the wazir, to amuse his master, addressed the fisherman, saying: "How long have you been sultan, dear master, and can you tell me what has happened to your predecessor?" "I deposed the fellow," answered the fisherman, "I said: 'Go away!' and he went away." "Did he not protest?" asked the wazir. "Not at all," replied the fisherman, "He was delighted to be released from the burden of kingship. He abdicated with such good grace that I keep him by me as a servant. He is an excellent dancer. When he pines for his throne, I tell him stories. Now I want to relieve myself." So saying, he drew himself up in fancied majesty and, walking over to the sultan, seemed to be about to meet his need. "I feel the same desire," exclaimed the kadi; and took up the same threatening position in front of the wazir. The two victims shouted with laughter and fled from that house, crying over their shoulders: "God's curse on all hashish eaters!"

Next morning, that the jest might be complete, the sultan called the kadi and his guest before him. "O discreet pillar of our law," he said, "I have called you to me because I wish to learn the most convenient manner of relief. Should one squat and carefully lift the robe, as religion prescribes? Should one stand up, as is the unclean habit of unbelievers? Or should one undress completely and go against one's friends, as is the custom of two hashish eaters of my acquaintance?"

Knowing that the sultan used to walk about the city in disguise, the kadi realised in a flash the identity of his last night's visitors, and fell on his knees, crying: "My lord, my lord, the hashish spake in these indelicacies, not I!" But the fisherman, who by his careful daily taking of the drug was always under its effect, called somewhat sharply: "And what of it? You are in your palace this morning, we were in our palace last night." "O sweetest noise in all our kingdom," answered the delighted king, "as we are both sultans of this city, I think you had better henceforth stay with me in my palace. If you can tell stories, I trust that you will at once sweeten our hearing with a chosen one." "I will do so gladly, as soon as you have pardoned my wazir," replied the fisherman; so the sultan bade the kadi rise and sent him back forgiven to his duties. Then he dismissed all save the fisherman, who immediately began to tell him:

THE TALE OF THE FATHER OF FARTS

IT IS RELATED that there was a kadi in the city of Trablus in Syria, during the reign of the khalifat

Haroun Al-Rachid, who exercised the functions of his office with a notorious severity. His only servant, and the only woman in his harem, was an old negress like a Nile buffalo; for the man's parsimony equalled the rigour of his judgments. Allah curse him! Though he was abundantly rich, he lived on stale bread and onions. Also his avarice went hand in hand with an ostentation of generosity. When a neighbour called about meal time, the kadi would cry to the negress: "Lay the gold-fringed cloth!" No one was ever invited to the repast which followed, and the show of the cloth, instead of being taken as an indication of bounty, passed into a proverb; so that a man who had been ill-served at any feast would say: "I ate at the kadi's gold-fringed cloth." It will be seen that this wretched old man, to whom Allah had given both riches and honour, lived a life which would have sickened a starving dog. May he burn in Hell!

One day, certain folk who wished to influence the kadi to give a favourable judgment, said to him: "O our master, why do you not take a wife? That old negress is not worthy of you." "Who would find me a wife?" asked the kadi; and one of them answered: "I have a very beautiful daughter; your slave would be highly honoured if you would take her to your house." The kadi promptly accepted this offer, and the marriage took place at once. The girl was conducted to her husband's house in the evening and, being most discreet and amiable, refused to show her surprise when no food was produced and no mention made of it. The guests and witnesses stayed on in hope for some time and then, as the kitchen fire was not even lighted, returned to their own homes, cursing the bridegroom's meanness.

The young wife had begun to starve before she

heard her husband tell the negress to lay the gold-fringed cloth. As she was accustomed to plenty of excellent food in her father's house, she went forward eagerly as soon as the cloth was laid, but only to discover that the sole dish was a basin containing three bits of brown bread and three onions. As she sat in amaze, the kadi took one of the pieces of bread himself, gave the like to the negress, and invited the girl to devour her share, saying: "Do not fear to abuse the gifts of Allah!" He swallowed his portion with great gusto, and the negress made but one mouthful of hers, for it was the first meal of the day; but for all her good will the unfortunate wife could not swallow a mouthful of the horrible stuff. She left the table, fasting and bitterly resenting the darkness of her destiny. Three days passed and, on each, the gold-fringed cloth was set with brown bread and sorrowful onions. But on the fourth day, the kadi, hearing cries from his harem, went to investigate and was met by the negress who told him that her mistress had revolted against that house and had sent to fetch her father.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seven-hundred-and-ninety-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE KADI SOUGHT his wife with furious flaming eyes, heaped curses upon her, accused her of all debauchery, cut away her hair by force, and repudiated her by the third divorce. Casting her forth into the street, he

shut the door violently behind her. May Allah damn the foul old knave!

A few days afterwards, this avaricious son of avarice found another wife in the person of the daughter of certain folk who wished to stand well with him. He married again; but the poor child, after three days of onions, revolted and was divorced. Yet this served as no lesson to others who needed the good graces of that horrible old man, and he married several other daughters on the same terms, casting them forth after a day or so, because they could not abide the onions.

But a time came when the multitude of his divorces was noised abroad and grew to be the general subject of conversation in the harems; the matrons banded together and decreed that henceforth the miser was to be considered unmarriageable.

Now that no woman would have it, the kadi began to be tormented by his father's inheritance and took long walks to cool its importunity. One evening, he saw a woman approaching him mounted upon a grey mule, and was very much affected by the richness of her clothes and possibility of her figure. He gave a twist to the sad ends of his moustaches and bowed before her respectfully, saying: "Whence come you, noble lady?" "Along this road," she answered. "I know that, I know that," answered the kadi with a chuckle, "but from what city?" "From Mosul," she answered. "Are you married or single?" said he. "Single," said she. "If you would like to be my wife," said he, "I will bind the bargain by becoming your husband." "Tell me where you live," said she, "and I will let you know tomorrow." The kadi told her where he lived; but she knew already, she knew. She left him with charming glances out of the corners of her eyes.

Next morning, she sent a message to the kadi saying that she would marry him if she received a dowry of fifty dinars. The miser had a violent struggle with himself, but he sent the fifty dinars, bidding the negress to bring back the bride. As soon as the girl arrived at his house, the marriage contract was written out, and the witnesses went away unfed.

Soon the kadi called to the negress, saying: "Lay the gold-fringed cloth." When the basin was brought in, holding three dry crusts and three onions, the new bride took her portion and ate it with relish, saying: "I thank Allah for an excellent repast." She smiled gratefully at the kadi, and he cried: "I also thank Him that He has sent me, out of His generosity, a wife who is all perfection, who takes today's little and tomorrow's much with equal mind!" But the blind pig did not know the destiny which lay in wait for him in the cunning brain of that delightful woman.

Next morning, when her husband was away at the diwan, the girl inspected all the rooms of the house and came at last to a cabinet whose door was closed with three enormous locks and strengthened by three strong iron bars. She walked about and about this cabinet with the liveliest curiosity, until she found a hole in one of the mouldings which would almost admit the passage of a finger. Setting her eye to it, she was overjoyed to see all the kadi's accumulated treasure of gold and silver set in open copper jars upon the floor inside. Being determined to profit by this discovery, she procured a long palm stalk and, smearing the end of it with a sticky paste, passed it through the hole in the moulding; by twisting it about in the mouth of one of the jars, she caused several gold pieces to adhere to it, and triumphantly withdrew them. Returning to her own apartment, she

gave the money to the negress, saying: "Go out to the market and buy fresh rolls sprinkled with sesame, some saffron rice, some tender lamb, and the finest fruits and pastries which you can find." The negress went forth in eager astonishment and brought back all these excellent things to her mistress, who made her partake of them in equal shares. "Light of my head," the poor old woman cried, "may this succulent generosity turn to fair white fat upon you! I have never eaten such a meal!" "You may feed thus every day if you will only keep silence and say nothing to the kadi," answered the girl; so the negress kissed her hand and promised absolute discretion.

"Lay the gold-fringed cloth!" cried the kadi when he returned at noon; but his wife served him with the remains of her own excellent meal. He ate greedily until he could hold no more, and then asked the source of the provision. "Dear master," replied the girl, "I have many relations in this city; one of them sent these dishes to me. I would have thought nothing of them, had it not been for the joy it gives me to share them with you." And the kadi rejoiced in his soul that he had married such a wife.

Next morning the palm stalk was no less successful, so that the wife was able to purchase a lamb stuffed with pistachios, and other admirable matters. She invited some of her neighbours to eat with her, and all the women feasted pleasantly until the hour of the kadi's return. Soon after the guests had departed, carrying with them the promise that these joyful mornings should often be repeated, the kadi entered and bade the negress spread the gold-fringed cloth. But when he was served with even more delicate and numerous viands than the day before, he became a little anxious and asked his wife how she had come

by such costly things. The girl, who was herself waiting upon him, answered without hesitation: "Dear master, you must take no more thought for our nourishment. One of my aunts sent me these few trifling dishes. Oh, I am happy if my master is satisfied." The kadi congratulated himself on having married so thoughtful and well-related a damsel, and set about stuffing himself to the supreme limit of his capacity.

At the end of a year of such living the kadi had become so fat and had developed so notorious a belly that the people used the thing as a proverb, saying: "As large as the kadi's belly!" "As stupendous as the kadi's belly!" The poor fool did not know that his wife had sworn to avenge all those unfortunate girls whom he had starved and shorn and cast aside; but you shall now hear how thoroughly she carried out her intention.

Among the neighbours whom she fed daily was a pregnant woman, the wife of a necessitous porter and already the mother of five children. One day her hostess said to her: "Dear neighbour, as Allah has given you a numerous family and very little else, would you like to hand over your baby to me when it is born, that I, who am barren, may care for it and rear it as my own? If you agree and promise to keep absolute silence, I will see that you and yours never feel the pinch of poverty again." The porter's wife accepted this offer and promised absolute secrecy. On the day appointed by Allah, she gave birth to a boy who was twice the size of an ordinary infant, and the kadi's wife received him.

That morning the girl prepared a dish consisting of beans, peas, white haricots, cabbage, lentils, onions, cloves of garlic, various heavy grains and powdered spices. The kadi's enormous belly was quite empty

when he returned for the midday meal, so he took helping after helping of this mixture, until all was finished. "Make me such a dish every day," he said, "It slips most pleasantly and easily down the throat." "May it be both delicious and digestible!" answered his wife.

The kadi congratulated himself, as he had so often done before, on his excellent choice of a wife; but an hour afterwards his belly began visibly to swell. A noise as of a far-off tempest made itself heard inside him; low grumbings and far thunders shook the walls of his being and brought in their train sharp colics, spasms, and a final agony. He grew yellow in the face and began to roll groaning about the floor, holding his belly in his two hands. "Allah, Allah!" he cried, "I have a terrible storm within! Who will deliver me?" Soon his paunch became as tight as a gourd and his cries brought his wife running. She made him swallow a powder of anise and fennel, which was soon to have its effect, and, at the same time, to console and encourage him, began rubbing and patting the afflicted part, as if he had been a little sick child. Suddenly she ceased the movement of her hand and uttered a piercing cry: "Yuh, yuh, a miracle, a prodigy! O my master, my master!" In violent contortions, the kadi stammered forth: "What is the matter, what is the miracle?" But she only answered: "Yuh, yuh! O my master, my master!" "Tell me what the matter is!" he yelled; and she passed her hand afresh over that tempestuous belly, as she replied: "Exalted be the name of the Highest! He says, and it is done! Who shall discover His secret purposes, my master?" Between two howls, the kadi gasped: "May Allah curse you for torturing me so! What is the matter? Tell me at once!" Then said his wife: "Master,

dear master, His will be done! You are with child! And your time is close at hand!"

The kadi rose up at these incredible words, and cried: "Have you gone mad? How can a man be pregnant?" "As Allah lives I do not know," she answered, "but the child is moving in your belly; I have felt it kicking and touched its head. Allah scatters increase where He will, may His name be exalted! Pray for the Prophet, my husband!" So the kadi groaned out in the midst of his convulsion: "May the blessing of Allah be upon him!" Then his pains increased and he fell howling to the floor in a crisis of agony. Suddenly came relief. A long and thunderous fart broke from him, shaking the foundations of the house and throwing its utterer violently forward, so that he swooned. Then followed a multitude of other escapes, gradually diminishing in sound but rolling and re-echoing through the troubled air. Last came a single deafening explosion and all was still.

As the kadi came gradually to himself, he saw a little mattress by his side, on which a new-born baby, swaddled in linens, lay squalling and grimacing. His wife bent over him, saying: "Praise be to Allah and to His Prophet for this happy deliverance!" Then she went on murmuring the sacred names over her husband and the child, until the kadi did not know whether he dreamed or whether his recent sufferings had turned his head. But when he came to consider the matter calmly, the sight of the child, the cessation of his pains, and the memory of the tempest which had escaped from his belly, forced him to believe in this miraculous birth. Also maternal love caused him to accept the infant. "Surely Allah may bring forth His people according to His will!" he said, "Even a man, if he is fated to do so, may bear a

child in due season! Get me a nurse, dear wife, for I cannot feed the child myself." "I had already thought of that; I have one waiting in the harem," she replied, "But a mother's milk is best of all. Are you sure that your breasts have not swelled?" The kadi felt anxiously, and answered, "No, there is nothing there."

The young wife rejoiced at the success of her strategy and, after telling the kadi that he must keep his bed for forty days and forty nights, gave him such medicines as are usual and petted him till he fell into a doze. Being worn out by his colic, the old man slept for a long time and, when he woke, found his body as well as his mind was ill at ease.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

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*But When
The Eight-hundredth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HIS FIRST CARE was to enjoin secrecy on his wife, saying: "I am lost for ever if folk get to know that the kadi has given birth to a veritable child." Instead of reassuring him, his wife answered: "We are not the only folk who know of the fortunate miracle. All our neighbours have already heard about it from the nurse. And I am afraid that it will be as difficult to prevent the news from spreading through the city, as it would have been to stay the tongue of the nurse in the first place. They are all babblers."

The kadi spent the forty days upon his bed in deep mortification, not daring to move for fear of compli-

cations and internal bleeding, and brooding all the time over his monstrous accident. "Surely my foes will accuse me of many ridiculous things," he said to himself, "They will say that I have let myself be treated in some extraordinary fashion, and that it is all very well for me to be severe in my judgments when I have given myself up to such strange immoralities that I can bear a child. As Allah lives I am sure that they will accuse me of having been seduced; me, their virtuous kadi; and I have almost forgotten what it feels like!"

Thus he reflected, little knowing that his avarice was the cause of all his woes; and the more he thought, the blacker and more pitiable his case appeared to him. When his wife told him at last that he might rise without fear of complications, he bathed in the house, because he did not dare to go to the hammam. Finally he resolved to quit the city of Trablus, rather than run the risk of being recognised in the streets. He informed his wife of his intention and she, while pretending deep grief that he would be obliged to abandon his great office, only made him the more fixed on flight, by saying: "Evil tongues are certainly wagging about you now; but your adventure will soon be forgotten. Then you can return and devote yourself to rearing your child. . . . I think that we had better call him Miracle." "Call him what you like," answered the kadi. That night he departed from the city by stealth, and journeyed in the direction of Damascus.

He came to Damascus weary, but happy in the thought that no one knew his name or story. Yet, in the next few hours, he heard the tale of his exploit repeated countless times in all the public places of that

city. Also, as he had feared, each new tale-teller added some fresh detail to tickle the laughter of his hearers, attributing extraordinary organs to the kadi and bestowing on him every variety of that name which he dared not formulate even to himself. But happily no one knew his face and he was able to go on his way unrecognised. Towards night he even grew so hardened that he would pause and listen to his own story. In fact, when he heard himself accused not of one child but of a whole family, he could not help laughing a little, and murmuring: "They may say what they like, as long as they do not recognise me."

Though he lived in Damascus even more miserly than before, his provision of money at length ran out and he was obliged to sell his clothes for bread. Finally, rather than send a message to his wife in which he would have to tell her where his treasure lay, he hired himself out to a mason as a mortar-carrier.

Years went by, and the old kadi, round whom the curses of the people of Trablus swarmed at night, became as thin as a cat locked in a barn. At last, feeling certain that the years would have effaced the memory of his misfortune, he left Damascus and came, a mere wraith of skin and bone, to his native city. As he went through the gate, he saw a group of children playing together and heard one of them say to another: "How do you expect to win when you were born in the kadi's year, the year of the Father of Farts?" "I thank Allah," murmured the delighted kadi, "that he has caused my tale to be forgotten! Behold, some other kadi has become a proverb in the mouths of the children!" He went up to the boy who had spoken, saying: "What kadi is this whom you call the Father of Farts?" "He

was given that name," answered the child, "because once, when he had broken wind enormously, his wife made him think . . ." but nothing is to be gained by repeating the sorry story here.

Realising for the first time that he had been fooled by his wife, the kadi left the children and ran in all haste to his own house; but the doors were open to the wind, the floor was broken, and the walls had crumbled away. In the remains of the treasure cabinet, there was no gold piece or silver piece, nor hint nor smell that such had been. His neighbours, hearing him lament, told him, as well as they could for laughter, how his wife had given him up for dead and departed with all his goods into a far country. Without answering a word, he turned and left that city. Nor was anything ever heard of him again.

Such, O king of time, said the hashish eater, is the tale of the Father of Farts, as I heard it. But Allah knows all!

In his huge delight at this tale, the sultan gave the fisherman a robe of honour, saying: "In Allah's name, tell me something more, O sugar-mouth!" "I hear and I obey!" answered the hashish eater, and he told:

THE TALE OF THE KADI MULE

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious king, that there was a man in one of the cities of Egypt whose profession of tax collector caused him often to be away from home. As he was not dowered with strength, in a woman's interpretation of that word, his wife did not fail to profit by his continued absences. Her lover was as handsome as the moon and always ready to

satisfy her. She loved him so, that she not only returned his services in kind, but gave him a plentiful allowance of money in exchange for unlimited fondling. For years they lived together delightfully on every possible occasion, glutting each other with love. Glory be to Allah, who has given power to some and impotence to others!

One day the girl's husband harnessed his mule, before setting out to collect taxes. He filled one of the sides of his saddlebag with papers and garments, and bade his wife stock the other with food. Eager to be rid of him, the woman set about her task and soon discovered that she had no bread. Though the negress had begun to grind corn for a new supply, the tax collector could not wait and set off to the market to buy some loaves, leaving his mule before the manger in the stable.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Eight-hundred-and-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AS HIS WIFE waited his return in the courtyard, her lover, who thought that the husband had already departed, entered in great haste, crying: "You must let me have three hundred dirhams!" "I have not got them today, and I do not know where to get them," she answered. "But there is the mule, my sister," the young man urged, "Give me the mule and I can sell him for three hundred dirhams. I must have the money." "You are mad!" cried

the girl, "If my husband comes back and does not find his mule, he will beat me." But the youth looked so woebegone and talked so eloquently that she ceded to his prayers at last and let him lead away the mule. She took care, however, to retain the harness.

Soon the husband returned with the bread under his arm, and went into the stable to place it in the bag. When he saw the animal's headpiece hanging on a nail and the saddle lying with the bag on the straw, he cried to his wife to know what had become of the mule. "He went out just now," she answered calmly, "He turned on the threshold and told me that he was going to administer justice at the diwan." "Do you dare to mock at me?" shouted the collector, lifting his fist in a rage, "Do you not know that I could crush you with one blow of this?" "The name of Allah be upon and about us two!" cried the wife without losing countenance, "Why should I mock you? How could I try to deceive you? If I wanted, how could I succeed when you are so clever? Your wit would tear my clumsy invention into tatters. . . . But I have a thing to tell you which I have not dared to say before, fearing lest I should draw some misfortune upon our heads: the mule is bewitched and sometimes changes into a kadi!" "Allah, Allah," began the collector, but the girl cut him short and went on: "The first time I saw a strange man leaving our stable, I was terribly frightened and veiled my face with the corner of my robe. I was about to flee, when he came up to me, and said in a grave and good-natured voice: 'Refresh your eyes, calm your dear soul, my girl; I am no stranger, I am your husband's mule. But by nature I am a human being, a kadi; I was turned into a mule by certain foes well versed in sorcery. Being

ignorant of these arts, I could not help myself; but I will say this much for my persecutors: they are Believers, and allow me from time to time to resume my human form and go to the diwan on the appointed day. It is my fate to live sometimes as a mule and sometimes as a kadi, until Allah in His bounty shall break the spell and free me from my foes. Kind mistress, I beg you, in the name of your father and mother, not to say a word of all this to your husband, the tax collector; for he is an upright and religious man and, if he knew that he had a beast in his house under sentence of magic, he might get rid of me. He might sell me to some farmer, who would ill-treat me from dawn till dusk and feed me upon rotten beans. I could not endure that, now that I am accustomed to the rich feeding of your stable. And there is another thing, sweet, kind mistress: I beseech you to request the noble tax collector not to prick me so strongly in the bum when he is in a hurry, for I have an excessive sensibility in that part.'

"After he had proffered these two requests, our mule, that is to say the kadi, departed for the diwan. I am sure you would find him there now.

"I cannot keep the mule's secret any longer without incurring your anger; but I beg Allah to pardon me my lack of faith towards the poor kadi. Now that you know, perhaps you will let me give you a word of advice. I suggest that you do not rashly get rid of the mule, for he is not only a zealous and sober animal, who never farts and seldom shows his temper, but he could, at need, give you excellent advice on delicate questions of jurisprudence."

"As Allah lives, this is a strange tale!" cried the

astonished tax collector, "But what am I to do without my mule? I have to go and collect the taxes of such-and-such villages at once. He did not say what time he would be back?" "He did not mention any hour," answered his wife, "He only told me that he was going to the diwan. But I know what I would do if I were in your place. . . . Yet you are much cleverer than I, and have no need for my suggestions." "I never said that you were altogether a fool," grumbled the man, "Tell me what you have in your mind." So the girl continued: "In your place, I would take a handful of beans and go to the diwan; when I was in the presence of the poor kadi, I would show him the beans from far off and sign to him that I needed the services of my mule. As he has a sense of duty, and also because he likes beans, he would leave his judge's seat and follow me home."

"You are a clever woman and I will follow your advice," exclaimed the tax collector, as he armed himself with a handful of beans and prepared to leave the courtyard. "One thing more," cried his wife after him, "be careful to treat him well, for both kadis and mules are by nature vindictive." Armed with patience by this last counsel, the tax collector came to the diwan and entered the audience chamber, where the kadi sat upon his raised seat.

He stood at the back of the hall, behind the pleaders, and, holding out the beans with one hand, signed to the kadi with the other, as much as to say: "Come here, I wish to speak to you." The kadi, recognising him as one of the chief tax collectors, supposed that he carried an important message from the wali, so he suspended the business of the court immediately and followed the man out into the vestibule. But the unhappy tax collector still walked forward, holding

out the beans behind him and making a clicking noise with his tongue.

When the two were out of earshot of all, the tax collector bent and whispered in the kadi's ear: "As Allah lives, my friend, I was deeply grieved to hear of your misfortune. You must not be annoyed that I have come to fetch you. You will understand that I have several villages to visit, and could not wait until the diwan was over. Please turn yourself into a mule as quickly as you can, for it is already late." The kadi recoiled in terror, and the tax collector, seeing that, continued even more kindly: "I swear by Allah that I will never prick you in the bum again, for I know how delicate a backside He has given you. Now, good mule, good friend, let us have no more delay; and I promise you a double ration of beans to-night, with a portion of fresh lucern."

The kadi was quite sure by now that he had to do with an escaped patient from the madhouse; he turned very yellow and began to edge back towards the hall; but the tax collector dodged behind him and blocked the entrance. Seeing that there was no one in sight to help him, the kadi put his trust in persuasion, and said sweetly: "It seems, dear master, that you have lost your mule and are anxious to replace it. In my opinion nothing could be more just. Here are three hundred dirhams; you will be able to buy the finest mule in all the city with that money. And Allah be good to you!" So saying, he gave the collector three hundred dirhams from his belt and retreated to the hall, where he took care to assume an air of grave reflection, that people might think he had received some communication of importance. "As Allah lives," he said to himself, "it was worth three hundred dirhams to avoid a scandal in front of all these

pleaders, and, if I put on the screw a little, I can recoup myself at their expense before the morning is over." Then he sat down and resumed the business of the court. So much for him.

The tax collector went to the beast market and began leisurely to examine all the mules, one after the other; at length he was attracted by one which seemed to fulfil his requirement, and went up to it, in order to make a final decision. But, when he came nearer, he recognized his own mule and the mule recognised him. It threw back its ears and brayed for joy; but the man was offended at its audacity and recoiled, crying: "As Allah lives, I shall not buy you. I need a mule who is always a mule. A mixture of mule and kadi is too uncertain." He departed in high dudgeon, and bought another and a better mule with the three hundred dirhams. Then he returned to his wife and told her all that had happened.

In this way all the world was satisfied, thanks to the wit of one woman: the lover got his money, the husband obtained a better mule, and the kadi, in a joyful reaction from his danger, took double his usual fees from those who came before him.

That is all I know about the kadi mule, O king. But Allah knows all!

"O sugar-mouth, delightful friend, I herewith appoint you my grand-chamberlain!" cried the delighted sultan. He clothed the hashish eater in the insignia of that high office and then sat down again, saying: "Surely, good grand-chamberlain, you know some more stories?" "I do," answered the erstwhile fisherman; and, wagging his head from side to side, began:

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Eight-hundred-and-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE KADI AND THE ASS'S FOAL

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious king, that there were once a poor husband and wife, who gained their food by hawking roasted maize and had one daughter as fair as any moon. Allah willed that the kadi of that city should demand the girl's hand in marriage and, though prodigiously ugly, with a beard like hedgehog's spines, and a squint in one eye, gain immediate consent from the father. For the old man was both rich and respected, and the girl's parents only looked to the marriage to bring them an amelioration of their lot, forgetting that, though riches may contribute to happiness, they are not its well-spring: a lesson which the kadi at least was doomed to learn by bitter experience.

To make himself agreeable and to balance the disadvantages of his extreme age and ugliness, the kadi gave daily presents of novelty to his young wife and satisfied all her caprices, without considering that neither indulgence nor presents make up for a young and sturdy love. As time went on, he complained bitterly to himself that he could not rouse in his wife an instinct which she had not yet learnt.

Now this kadi had in his employ a young scribe whom he so cherished that he would, in spite of himself, sometimes speak of him to his wife. He also spoke of his wife to the young man and complained of her coldness, which shows that Allah blinds those creatures whom He wishes to destroy. His senile

idiocy grew so great that he even pointed out the youth to his wife, when he passed before the window. The girl straightway felt the power of love rise in her heart, and very soon passion had found out a way to lull suspicion. As she adored him with her whole soul, the young wife naturally gave the scribe her body, and he paid her back in a hard coin of which the kadi was incapable. The two young people loved each other better as the days went by, and the kadi rejoiced to see his wife grow happier and more beautiful.

In order that their meetings might be safe, the girl used to hang a white handkerchief in a window which looked over the garden, as a sign that the kadi was absent. But if the youth saw a red handkerchief, he knew that the husband was at home and the door closed to him.

One day, the girl heard blows and cries at the door just as she had hung up the white handkerchief, and soon saw her husband, who had been taken ill at the diwan, carried into her presence on the arms of the eunuchs. He looked so pitiful that his wife sprinkled him with rose-water and cared tenderly for him, in spite of her disappointment. She undressed and put him to bed, where he speedily fell asleep; then, in order to make the best of that useless morning, she made a packet of perfumed linen and departed for the hamman, forgetting to replace the white handkerchief by the red danger signal.

Seeing the white handkerchief fluttering in the casement, the lover leapt lightly from the neighbouring terrace and climbed through the window into the chamber, where he was used to find his mistress waiting naked beneath the bedclothes. As the place had been left in obscurity to favour the kadi's sleeping, and as

the girl would often receive him in silence, he walked, laughing, up to the bed and, lifting the clothes, made a move with his hand as if to playfully caress his love. But instead of that which he sought, his hand encountered—may the Devil avoid us all!—the hair covered chest of the ill and half awake kadi. With an exclamation of horror he snatched back his fingers but not before the kadi had seized the marauding wrist and furiously fallen upon its owner. Rage gave the old man strength, while shock weakened the younger; so the kadi was able to pick up his adversary, after tripping him, and hurl him into a large chest, where the mattress was kept during the day. He banged down the lid and turned the key in the lock without taking the precaution to see whether or not he recognised the intruder. Then, as the excitement and exercise had quite cured his indisposition, he enquired of the eunuch whither his wife had gone, and hastened to station himself outside the door of the hammam. For he said to himself: “Before I kill him, I must know whether he is in league with my wife. I will open the box in the presence of witnesses, and thus confound her, if she be guilty. If she knows nothing of the man, I will kill him with my sword; but if they are lovers, I will strangle them both with my own fingers.”

As each bather entered the hammam, he stopped her, saying: “In Allah’s name, tell my wife so-and-so to come out at once, as I wish to speak with her.” But he made this request so shortly, with such flashing eyes, such violent gestures, that all the women took him for a madman and ran up the steps with frightened cries. The first called out the news at the top of her voice, when she entered the hall of the hammam, and the kadi’s wife suddenly remembered that she had

forgotten to change the handkerchiefs. "Surely I am lost!" she moaned to herself, "Allah alone knows what has happened to my lover!" As she hastened the rest of her bath, she heard the doings of the madman outside discussed by all her neighbours; but, since none of them knew her by sight, she was able to behave as if the matter did not concern her and depart without attracting attention. In the entrance hall she saw a poor old woman seated on the floor and endeavouring to sell chick-peas to the bathers; so she went up to her, saying: "Here is a golden dinar for you, good aunt, if you will lend me your blue veil and that empty basket." Delighting in her luck, the old woman gave her the coarse veil and the basket; and the girl disguised herself with these things before venturing forth.

She saw her husband pacing frenziedly up and down in front of the door, with foam on his lips and eyes protruding from his head. When she went up to him and asked him in disguised accents to buy some chick-peas, he was cursing hammams at the top of his voice, the people who used hammams, the people who kept hammams, and the people who built hammams, but when he heard her request, he broke off to call down all the plagues of the world on chick-peas, those who sold chick-peas, those who planted chick-peas, and those who ate chick-peas. The girl ran off with a laugh and, reaching her home, climbed swiftly to the bedchamber, where she was startled to hear a sound of groaning. She threw back the windows in haste and then, seeing no one, was at first inclined to call for help; but a louder groan than the others led her to the mattress-chest and, turning the key in the lock, she plucked open the lid in the name of Allah.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Eight-hundred-and-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

Though her lover was nearly dead for lack of air, she could not help laughing for a moment at the sight of him doubled up in the chest; but soon her love conquered and she sprinkled his face with rose-water. When he had quite recovered, she briefly told him what had happened and the two sat down together to concoct a plan.

An ass in the stable had dropped a foal the day before. The girl ran forth and, taking the pleasant little animal in her arms, brought it to the bedroom, shut it in the chest, and turned the key in the lock. Then she dismissed her lover, bidding him not come again until she flew the white signal, and returned in the direction of the hammam. She slipped past her husband, but, as she was entering the vestibule, he cried after her: "O chick-pea seller, tell my wife that if she does not come out at once I will pull the hammam down about her head!" The girl laughed and, gliding through the door, returned her shawl and basket to the old woman; then, taking up her own packet of linen, she left the building again, carelessly swinging her hips.

As soon as the kadi saw her, he bore down on her, crying: "Where have you been, vile strumpet? I have waited here for two hours; follow me instantly, perverse, unfaithful whore!" The girl checked in her walk, exclaiming: "In Allah's name, what is the

matter? Have you gone mad, that you make a scandal in the street?" "Enough!" shouted the kadi, "You can say what you will at home; now, follow!" He strode ahead, throwing his arms about and spitting bile, leaving her to follow as best she might.

When they reached the house, the kadi shut his wife in another chamber and went forth to collect the sheikh of the quarter and four witnesses. To these he added a band of neighbours and, after leading them to the bedchamber, freed his wife and led her into their presence.

She ran immediately to a far corner, and sat there in her veils, moaning: "Woe, woe, for my poor husband! His illness has made him mad. The poor soul has lost his wits, he has cursed me, he has brought strange men into the harem! Woe, woe, strangers in the harem! Alas, alas! He is mad, quite mad!"

And indeed the kadi seemed to the witnesses to be in a high fever of delirium; his face was bright yellow, his beard trembled, and his eyes flashed fire. Some of them tried to calm him; but he cried: "Look, look! Do not listen! This is her last day! This is the day of judgment!" With that he turned the key in the chest and threw back the lid. At once the little ass put forth his head, wagging his ears and regarding the company with round black tender eyes; then, for delight at looking upon the day once more, he threw up his tail and called his mother with a mighty bray.

The kadi was taken with convulsions and spasms; he threw himself upon his wife and tried to strangle her, while she fled round the chamber from him, calling for help.

Seeing foam upon the kadi's lips, the witnesses flung themselves between the two and, taking hold of the old man's arms, forced him to the carpet, where he

babbled unintelligible words mingled with threats of strangulation. The sheikh of the quarter, though grieving to see the kadi in such a state, felt obliged to say to those who held him down: "He must be restrained, alas, until he returns to his senses." "Allah cure him!" cried some, "He was a most respectable old man." "How could one be jealous of a little ass not two days old?" said others. Others again asked: "How did it get into the chest?" and "He thought it was a man and locked it in himself," answered the woman. With words of deep compassion all retired, except those who held the kadi down, and these did not need to stay long: for the old man's struggles and shoutings were so violent, when he caught sight of the mocking grimaces which his wife sent to his address behind the backs of the watchers, that he ruptured the veins of his neck and, spitting a wave of blood, fell back dead. May Allah have him in compassion, for he was an upright judge and left a sufficiency of riches to enable his young wife to marry the man she loved!

When he had made an end of this tale and saw that the king still listened greedily, the hashish eater said: "I will now tell you another story," and straightway began:

THE TALE OF THE ASTUTE KADI

IT IS RELATED that there was once a kadi in Cairo who committed so many prevarications and gave so many interested judgments that he was deprived of his high office and had to live by his wits. One day, when his head was as empty as his pocket, and his pocket as empty as his belly, he called his one remaining slave to him, a rascal as tricky and hungry as him-

self, and said to him: "I am ill and cannot leave the house today; you must either find us something to eat by going about the streets, or else send some people to me for legal advice." The slave departed with the intention of molesting some passer-by and then dragging him before his master to be fined. So, as soon as he saw a peaceful citizen coming towards him holding a bundle on his shoulder with both hands, he tripped him up and sent him flat on his back into the mud. The victim rose furiously, with stained garments and torn slippers, and was about to chastise his aggressor when he recognised the kadi's slave and, turning tail, fled away from so dangerous an encounter.

"They all know me, just as they all know my master," grumbled the slave, "I must think of some other way." As he turned a corner he saw a man carrying on his head a dish which contained a superb stuffed goose, garnished about with tomatoes, artichokes, and young marrows in a tempting pattern. The slave followed this man, and saw him enter the public kitchen and deliver the bird to the master of the oven, saying that he would call for it in an hour.

"Here is my chance," thought the kadi's slave. After a few minutes he entered the kitchen, saying: "Greeting, O Mustapha!" The master of the oven recognised him, and replied: "Greeting, O Mubarak! It is a long time since my coals have burnt for your master. Have you brought something for me to cook for him today?" "Nothing except the goose," answered Mubarak, "I have come for that." "But it does not belong to you, my brother," objected the cook. "Say not so, O sheikh," retorted the slave, "I watched that goose come out of the egg, I fed it, I killed it, and I stuffed it." "If that is so, I am ready to give

it to you," answered the cook, "But what shall I say to the man who brought it?" "He was acting under my instructions," replied Mubarak airily, "I do not think that he will return; but, if he does, he is fond of a good joke and you had better tell him that the goose gave a sharp cry and flew away as soon as you put the dish in the oven. Now give me the bird, please; I am sure that it is done."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Eight-hundred-and-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE COOK LAUGHED heartily and gave the dish in all confidence to Mubarak, who hastened with it to the kadi's house and helped his master to pick it clean.

Soon the owner of the goose came into the kitchen, saying: "My bird must be done, good master." "Not so," answered the cook, "for, as soon as I put her in the oven, she gave a piercing cry and flew away." The man, who had no humour in all his body, cried angrily: "O nothing, do you dare to laugh in my beard?" Words led to curses, curses led to blows, and soon the two men were violently fighting in the midst of a crowd which had speedily invaded the kitchen. "They are fighting over the resurrection of a stuffed goose!" said some of the neighbours and most of them took sides with the cook, whose honesty had always been unquestioned.

Among the spectators was a pregnant woman, whose curiosity had thrust her into the front rank. As the

cook aimed a terrific blow, his adversary stepped aside and the unfortunate woman received the fist in her belly. She fell to the earth, with a scream like that of an outraged hen, and suffered an abortion on that spot.

Her husband, who dwelt in a neighboring fruit shop, was told of the accident and ran up with an enormous bludgeon, crying: "I am going to murder this cook, and his father, and his grandfather! I am going to sweep off all the tribe of cooks from the face of the earth!" The master of the oven, being already weary, would not wait to face him, but fled precipitately. Fearing pursuit, he climbed on to a neighbour's terrace, by way of an old wall, and let himself drop over the balustrade. His fate willed that he should fall, with all his considerable weight, on a Moor who lay sleeping upon the terrace. All the poor man's ribs were broken and he died without waking. Other Moors, who were his kinsmen, ran up and secured the cook, beating him with sticks preparatory to leading him before a judge. The owner of the goose and the husband of the pregnant woman joined themselves to the Moors; and they were all starting off, when the kadi's slave, who had come back to spy the end of that affair, ran before them, crying: "Follow me, good folk! I will show the way!" Not knowing who he was, the injured parties followed him.

Putting on his gravest air, the kadi first took double deposit from all the pleaders and then pointed his finger at the accused, saying: "What have you to say in the matter of the goose, O cook?" Thinking that he had better adhere to the story told by the kadi's slave, the cook replied: "As Allah lives, O our

master the kadi, the bird gave a shrill cry and, stuffed as she was, rose from among the garnishing and flew away." Hearing this the owner cried: "Son of a dog, do you dare to tell such a tale in front of our lord the kadi?" But at this the kadi waxed indignant, saying to the owner: "And do you dare, O impious unbeliever, to doubt that He, who shall raise all creatures on the Last Day, collecting their scattered bones from the wide face of the earth, cannot give life to a goose who has all her bones complete and only lacks feathers?" Hearing this, the assembled crowd cried: "Glory be to Allah, who raises the dead!" and hooted the unfortunate owner of the bird until he departed, lamenting his lack of faith.

Then the kadi turned to the husband of the woman who had miscarried, saying: "What have you to say against this man?" He heard out the complaint, and then gave judgment: "The matter is clear; the cook certainly caused the abortion. The law of retaliation is strictly applicable here. You, O injured husband, have won your case and I empower you to take your wife and leave her with the guilty party until he makes her with child again. Also, she may live in his house and at his charges for the first six months of pregnancy, as the accident happened in the sixth month." Hearing this judgment, the husband cried: "O our lord the kadi, I withdraw my complaint. May Allah pardon my adversary!"

As the husband was leaving the presence, the kadi asked the relations of the dead Moor what charge they brought against the cook. They answered in a spate of words and whirlwind of gestures, showing the dead body and clamouring for the price of blood. "The evidence is conclusive," replied the kadi, "The price of blood is due to you. Will you be paid in

money or in kind, that is to say, blood for blood?" "In kind, O kadi!" shouted the savage Moors. "Be it so!" proclaimed the kadi, "Take this cook, wrap him in the coverlet of your dead kinsman and place him underneath the minaret of the mosque of sultan Hassan. Then the victim's brother may climb up the minaret and fall from the summit on top of the cook, to crush him as the victim was crushed. . . . Which of you is the victim's brother?" A certain Moor stood forth, crying: "O our lord the kadi, I withdraw my complaint against this man. May Allah pardon him!" Then he departed, followed by all the folk of his house.

The crowd went out marvelling at the equity, subtlety, and profound legal knowledge of the kadi. When the noise of the affair reached the ears of the sultan, he took the kadi back into favour and restored him to his high functions, dismissing the honest man who had replaced him. This latter owed his downfall, as far as we may see, to the fact that he had never stolen a goose.

Seeing that the king still hung eagerly upon his words, the hashish eater felt flattered, and also told the tale of:

THE MAN WHO UNDERSTOOD WOMEN

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that there were once two young men in Cairo who were close friends; though one, Ahmad, was married, and the other, Mahmud, was a bachelor. Ahmad, who was the elder by two years, made capital out of this difference to constitute himself his friend's tutor in all things, and especially on the subject of women. He would read him a thousand lessons out of his experience,

and ever conclude in this wise: "You will be able to say that you have known one man in your life who understood the malicious sex. You may indeed count yourself lucky to have a friend who can coach you in the arts of its deceit." Mahmud marvelled more and more at his friend's wisdom and was quite certain that the subtlest woman on earth could never deceive him, while he was so guarded. "You are a great man, Ahmad," he would often say, and Ahmad would preen himself and tap his friend on the shoulder, as he replied: "I will teach you to be even as I am."

One day when Ahmad said: "I will teach you to be even as I am; for I speak from experience and not by theory," young Mahmud ventured to reply: "Dear friend, if you will be so kind, I would like to learn how to enter into relations with a woman, before becoming perfect in the act of guarding against her."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Eight-hundred-and-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"IT IS THE easiest thing in the world," answered Ahmad in his schoolmaster's voice, "Go out tomorrow to the Feast of the Prophet, under the tents, and make close observation of all the women. When you have chosen one accompanied by a little child, and have judged, by looking through her veil, that she is worth your trouble, you must buy dates and sugared

peas for the child, play with him, caress him, embrace him; but on now account lift your eyes towards the mother. Only when the little boy has become your fast friend, you may ask the woman, without looking at her, the favour of carrying the child home. As you go along, you must keep the flies off his face and tell him a thousand silly pretty things. In the end, the mother will speak to you of her own accord, and the affair will be settled." With this piece of wise advice he left Mahmud to marvel by himself and to spend the rest of the day in saying over his lesson.

Early next morning, Mahmud made his way to the Feast and carried out his tutor's prescription to the letter. The result passed his wildest dreams; but Destiny had willed that the woman whose child he carried home should be the wife of his friend Ahmad. As he had never seen the girl, veiled or unveiled, he had not the least idea that he was betraying his friend; and the young wife, though she recognised Mahmud, was delighted at this proof of her husband's deep knowledge of the sex.

The two took great joy from their first meeting, and the youth, who was a virgin, tasted the full gamut of those joys which may be found in the caresses and endearments of an experienced Egyptian. They were so pleased with this first attempt that they repeated it several times in the following weeks. The woman rejoiced to play such a trick upon her presumptuous husband, and the husband only wondered why he no longer saw his friend Mahmud at those hours when they had been used to meet. "I expect he has profited by my advice," he said to himself.

One Friday, Ahmad went to the mosque and saw his friend near the fountain of ablution. The two men greeted each other and the elder asked if all had

gone well in the matter of the woman. Mahmud, who was delighted to have a confidant, replied ecstatically: "She is the most beautiful thing in the world! Butter and milk! Plump and white! Musk and jasmin! And what a brain! And what a cook! But I fear, dear friend, that her husband is a born fool or a complacent cuckold." "Most husbands are one or the other," replied Ahmad with a laugh, "Well, I am glad to have been of use. Go on with the good work, my friend." They entered the mosque together and there lost sight of each other.

When Ahmad came out from the prayer, he was at a loss for occupation, as all the shops were shut; so he went to visit a neighbour who lived next door to his own house. As he was talking with the man near a window which overlooked the street, he saw his friend Mahmud enter the house next door without even knocking, a sure proof that he was expected. At first Ahmad was inclined to rush home and, catching his friend with his wife, severely chastise the two of them; but then he reflected that his wife would be quite clever enough to hide her lover or let him slip from the house, when she heard the knocking on the door. Therefore he determined to enter by a secret way, known only to himself.

The two houses shared a communicating well, one half in each courtyard. "By Allah, I have just remembered that I dropped my purse in the well this morning!" remarked Ahmad casually to his host, "I pray you allow me to go down from your side; then, when I have found it, I will climb out into my own courtyard." "Do so, by all means," replied the neighbour, "I will bring a light." But Ahmad refused a light and, after saying goodbye, went down into the well.

Things went comfortably enough on the way down but, when Ahmad began to climb up the other side and had reached half way, trouble fell upon him in a very singular fashion. The servant came to draw water and, seeing a dark figure in the half light of the well, let the bucket drop from her hand, and fled, crying at the top of her voice: "Help, help! There is an Ifrit coming out of the well!" But the bucket, going upon the way of its destiny, hit Ahmad on the head and half stunned him.

Alarmed by the cries of the negress, Ahmad's wife dismissed her lover and, going down into the courtyard, leaned over the margin of the well. "Who is there?" she cried, and then, as a well-known voice boomed up to her in a thousand curses on wells in general, people who owned wells, folk who went down into wells, and women who let buckets fall from the tops of wells, she cried again: "O husband, what are you doing in the well?" "Be quiet, vile wretch!" he answered, "I have only been looking for a purse. Instead of asking foolish questions, help me out of this accursed place!" His wife laughed to herself as she saw through this excuse, and called certain of the neighbours, who hoisted Ahmad, in a state of collapse, up the well and over the side into safety. He allowed himself to be carried to bed, without making any accusation, but, as he lay recovering, he brooded bitterly over his humiliation and over an insult offered to one who understood women.

He resolved to take greater precaution in future and, as soon as he could rise, selected a suitable ambush at the corner of the street. He had not waited for many days before he saw his friend Mahmud slip through the half-open door, which was immediately shut behind him. Without a moment's delay he left

his hiding place and began to rain blows upon the panel.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Eight-hundred-and-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN SHE HEARD this violent knocking, Ahmad's wife bade her lover follow and, leading him forward, hid him behind the very door which was being assaulted. Then she opened to her husband, saying: "In Allah's name, my dear, why so much noise?" Ahmad seized her by the wrist and dragged her into the house. He ran up shouting to the bedchamber, while Mahmud walked calmly forth from behind the door and escaped down the street. Finding himself foiled again, Ahmad in the first throes of his rage resolved to divorce his wife immediately; but, on reflection, he decided to wait for an occasion of surer proof.

Such an occasion was not long delayed. A few days later Ahmad's father-in-law gave a feast to celebrate the circumcision of a son who had been born to him in his old age. Ahmad and his wife were invited; and Ahmad took care to ask Mahmud to accompany them. Soon all the men were seated before bountiful dishes in the lighted courtyard, which had been carpeted with rugs and made gay with flags for the occasion. The women were massed at the windows of the harem, so that they might see and hear without offending modesty. During the course of the meal, Ahmad brought the conversation round to those salacious anecdotes

which were his father-in-law's chief delight. When several of the guests had contributed examples of that most amusing kind of entertainment, Ahmad pointed to his friend, saying: "Our brother Mahmud told me a true tale the other day. It concerns himself and is much too good to be lost." "Let us have it at once, dear Mahmud!" cried their host; and Ahmad prompted his friend, saying: "You know the one I mean! Butter and milk! Musk and jasmin!" Delighted to be the centre of attention, Mahmud began to tell the story of his first meeting with his mistress and the ruse by which he had brought it about. He gave so many exact details of the girl and her house, that the giver of the feast soon recognised the heroine as his own daughter. Ahmad was congratulating himself that he would soon have ample proof before witnesses of his wife's misconduct, and his father-in-law was just about to rise in order to create a diversion, when a sudden painful cry rang out, as if a little child had been violently pinched. This cry made Mahmud aware of the danger which he ran and he had the presence of mind to change the thread of his narrative at the last moment. "But when I had carried the child into the courtyard of that house," he concluded, "and would have climbed up into the harem, the honest woman suddenly understood my intention and, snatching the infant from my arms, gave me so violent a blow in the face that I carry the marks of it to this day. Then she threatened to call the neighbours, and I departed, cursing her beneath my breath."

The host and all the guests laughed consumedly at this unexpected termination; only Ahmad seemed a little disappointed. When they rose to go, he asked his friend why he had changed the current of his

anecdote, and Mahmud answered: "That child's cry from the harem suddenly put it into my mind that both he and his mother might quite possibly be there. And I considered that, if they were there, the husband was sure to be one of our fellow guests. That is why I made haste to clear the woman's character; but, as you will have noticed, I did not spoil the story." Ahmad turned a sickly yellow colour and left his friend without a word. Next day he divorced his wife and started on pilgrimage to Mecca.

Thus Mahmud, who did not understand women, was able to marry the girl of his choice and live happily with her until the day of his death. But Allah knows all!

When he had made an end of this tale, the chamberlain fell silent. And the delighted sultan cried: "O fisherman, O chamberlain, O tongue of honey, henceforth you shall be my grand-wazir!" At that moment two men entered, seeking satisfaction from the sultan, and the hashish eater was called upon to settle their difference. Hastily donning the robes of his new office, he cried to the two pleaders: "Come near, and state the quarrel which has brought you to the justice of our lord the sultan!"

This is the tale of:

THE HASHISH EATER IN JUDGMENT

WHEN, O AUSPICIOUS king, the new grand-wazir had bidden the two pleaders to state their case (continued the farmer who had brought the cucumbers), the first said: "My lord, I took a cow of mine this morning to pasture in my field of fresh lucern. Her little calf followed at her heels or played about the road. Be-

fore I reached my destination, I met this man, riding on a mare which was accompanied by her colt, a little pitiful bandy-legged slip of a thing, almost an abortion.

"As soon as my little calf saw the foal he ran up to make acquaintance with her and jumped round her, caressing her under the belly with his muzzle. He played with her in a thousand ways, sometimes running at her gently and sometimes flinging his little feet in the air until the pebbles flew.

"Quite suddenly this gross and brutal fellow dismounted from the mare and slipped a cord round the neck of my charming little calf, saying: 'I think I will have him on a lead. I do not wish him to be perverted by playing with that miserable little foal, or with her mother, your vile cow.' Then he called pleasantly to my calf: 'Come little son of my mare, we do not wish to be corrupted.' In spite of my protestations, he led away my calf and left the horrible foal, threatening to break my head if I tried to take back that which is my own in the sight of Allah and before all men!"

When he had heard the first in silence, the new grand-wazir turned to the second man and asked him what he had to urge in his defence. "My lord," said the defendant, "it is a well-known fact that the calf was the offspring of my mare and that the wretched foal was dropped by this man's cow." "I suppose it is quite certain that cows can drop foals and mares give birth to calves?" interrupted the wazir, "You doubtless have something to bring forward in proof of your assertion?" "My lord, do you not know that nothing is impossible to Allah?" retorted the man, "He creates that which seems good to him and sows the seed of abundance where He wills. His creatures can only bow to His greater wisdom, giving

Him praise and glory." "That is a very correct sentiment," agreed the wazir, "Nothing is impossible to the Almighty; at His decree calves can be born of mares and foals from cows. Before you take the calf away, however, I will show both of you another example of Allah's power."

He ordered a large sack of flour and a small mouse to be brought into the presence, and said to the two pleaders: "Watch carefully and do not say a word." Then he turned to the defendant, bidding him lift the sack of flour and load it on the back of the mouse. "My lord, it will squash the creature flat!" objected the man. "O wretch of little faith," cried the wazir, "is not all possible to Allah who brings forth calves from mares?" He ordered the guards to seize the defendant and beat him soundly for his ignorance and impiety; but to the plaintiff he delivered all four animals.

Such, O king of time, was the judgment of the hashish eater; his was that higher wisdom which can show forth the truth by reducing the false to an absurdity. The sultan proved himself a prudent man when he made that fisherman his grand-wazir and showered honours upon him and took him for a friend. But Allah knows all!

When the fruit farmer had made an end of these short tales, the sultan rose to his feet, crying: "O tongue of honey and sugar, O prince among delightful men, who is more worthy to be my grand-wazir than a just thinker and charming teller of tales?" He robed the farmer in the garments of a grand-wazir and kept him ever as a companion, until they were visited by the Separator of friends, by the Destroyer.

"That," continued Shahrazade, "is as far as I have

read in the Diwan of Easy Jests and Laughing Wisdom." "O sister, your words are sweet and delectable!" cried little Doniazade; but Shahrazade answered: "These tales are nothing to the story of Princess Nurennahar, which I would tell you tomorrow if I were still alive and the king permitted." "I must hear that tale, for I do not know it," said King Shahryar to himself.

*But When
The Eight-hundred-and-seventh Night
Had Come*

LITTLE DONIAZADE CRIED: "Dear sister, please begin the tale which you promised us, for our sweet king has given leave." "Certainly," replied Shahrazade, and she told:

THE TALE OF PRINCESS NUREN- NAHAR & THE LOVELY JINNIA

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious king, that there was once, in the antiquity of time and the passage of the age and of the moment, a valorous king to whom Allah, in His goodness, had given three handsome sons: the eldest was called Ali, the second Hassan, and the third Husseyn. These three princes were brought up in their father's palace with their orphan cousin, Princess Nurennahar, who had no equal among the daughters of men for beauty and intelligence. She had a deer's eyes and her mouth was a rose; the narcissus and the anemone were in her cheeks and she wavered like a branch of the ban tree. She had grown in joy from babyhood with her three cousins, eating and sleeping with them; and the sultan ever had it in mind

to marry her to the son of some neighbouring king

But when Nurennahar had put on the veil of puberty, the sultan saw that all his sons loved her with an equal passion and would give their hearts to conquer and possess her. In his perplexity, he said: "If I give the child to one of her cousins, the other two will murmur against me; and I could not bear to see them sad and wounded. But if I marry her to some strange prince, all three will be plunged in a black distress and perhaps either kill themselves or depart for some far battle. Indeed I have a difficult problem to resolve." After long reflection, he called the three princes to him, saying: "My sons, you are all equal in my sight and I cannot show a preference to one by giving him the hand of our little princess in marriage; also I cannot marry her to all three of you. I only see one way of settling the matter so that there shall be no hard feeling between you: each of you must set out for a different land and bring back the strangest rarity he sees upon his travels. I will give the princess to the one who, in my opinion, returns with the greatest marvel. If you consent to this competition, I am ready to give each of you as much gold as he may need for the enterprise."

The three princes readily agreed to their father's plan, each feeling certain that he would bring back the greatest marvel and marry Nurennahar. Seeing them persuaded, the sultan sent for his treasurer and had each of his sons provided with as many bags of gold as he decided to take. Then, after recommending that they should not stay away too long, he gave them his blessing and bade them farewell. They set out on that same day, disguised as merchant travellers, mounted upon noble horses, and followed by a single slave apiece.

They rode together until they came to a khan at the meeting of three roads. There they took a bountiful repast together and settled the conditions of their search. It was agreed that each should be absent for one year, not a day more or less; that they should meet at this same khan at the end of that time, the first comer to wait for the rest, in order that they might return to their father in company. When their meal was finished, they washed their hands and embraced each other. Then they mounted their horses and each set forth by a different road.

After a journey of three months over mountain and valley, desert and meadowland, the eldest of the three brothers, Prince Ali, came to the kingdom of Bishangar on the sea coast of India. He hired the largest and cleanest chambers in the chief khan, for himself and his slave, and then lay down to rest. As soon as the fatigue of riding had passed away, he rose and went forth to examine the city, which was two parasangs in length and breadth, and girt by a triple wall. He made his way to the market, which he found to be formed of broad elegant streets converging on a central square, which held a marble fountain. All these streets were arched in to keep them cool; but they were pleasantly lighted by fretted openings in the stone. He discovered that each street harboured a different trade with all its merchandise. Thus, in one he saw nothing but fine Indian lawns, painted in bright pure colour with animals, forests, gardens of flowers; Persian brocades, and silks from China. In another were fair porcelains and brilliant earthenware, with symmetrical vases, pictured dishes, and extravagant shapes of glass. A third street showed every variety of those great Kashmir shawls which are so fine in texture that, when folded, they

can be held in the hollow of one hand; with prayer rugs and every design of carpet. One street, further to the left and closed at both ends by massive steel doors, was given over to a prodigious profusion of the goldsmith's work and art of the diamond setter. Prince Ali noticed with surprise that all the women in the crowd which thronged the market wore jewels about their legs, and on their feet, and through their ears, and even in their noses; also, he perceived that the whiter the woman, the more splendid gems she wore and the greater deference was paid to her, though the blacker women had skins which would have better shown off the precious stones.

But most Prince Ali admired the great quantity of little boys who sold roses and jasmin, the charming air with which they offered these flowers, and the way they seemed to slip through the crowds of people with the ease of quicksilver. He admired the strange liking which all these folk had for flowers, a predilection which caused them to wear blossoms in their hair, and behind their ears, and from their nostrils. Each shop was garnished with vases full of the prevailing rose and jasmin; and the whole market was so balmed with the scent of flowers that he seemed to himself to walk in a hanging garden.

When Prince Ali became weary of wandering among these beauties, he accepted the invitation of a merchant, who smiled at him from the door of his shop and invited him to enter. The man gave him the place of honour and served him with refreshments, neither urging him to buy nor plaguing him with idle questions. "What a delightful country!" thought the prince, "and what delightful people!" The charm of the merchant so wrought upon him that he was inclined to buy all his stock; but, when he reflected that he

would not know what to do with it, he contented himself with friendly talking.

While he was questioning his host concerning the manners and customs of the Indians, he saw a broker passing with a little carpet, not more than six feet square, folded across his arm. Outside the shop the broker halted and turned his head to right and left, crying: "Folk of the market, O buyers! I offer a bargain! This carpet, this prayer carpet, for thirty thousand gold dinars! I offer a bargain!"

"What a strange land," thought Ali, "A prayer carpet for thirty thousand dinars! I wonder if the man is joking?" But when he heard the man offer the carpet again, quite seriously, at the same price, he signed to him to approach and show his goods more nearly. Without a word the broker spread out the carpet; Prince Ali examined it carefully, and then said: "By Allah, I cannot see how this carpet can be worth such an exorbitant sum!" The broker smiled, as he answered: "Yet it is cheap at the price. Indeed I am instructed not to sell it for less than forty thousand dinars down, though I have started the sale at thirty thousand." "Then," cried the prince, "there must be some virtue in the carpet which is not visible to the naked eye."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Eight-hundred-and-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"YOU ARE RIGHT, my lord," answered the broker, "The carpet has this invisible virtue: that he who

sits on it is transported in the twinkling of an eye to the place of his desire. Nothing may stay its course; tempests flee before it and storms are dumb; mountains and walls and mighty locks open and give way at its approach."

Without another word, the broker began to fold up the carpet and move on; but Prince Ali stopped him with a joyful cry: "O broker of benediction, if what you say is true, I will pay you forty thousand dinars and add a further thousand as commission to yourself. But first I must have a demonstration of the miracle." "Where are your forty thousand dinars, my master?" asked the broker without showing undue delight, "and where are the further thousand which your generosity has promised?" "They are at the chief khan," answered Prince Ali, "I will go there with you and pay you, as soon as I have controlled the marvel." "Be it upon my head and before my eyes," replied the broker, "But the chief khan is far from here; we would go quicker upon the carpet than by walking." He spread out the carpet at the back of the shop and bade the prince be seated on it. Taking his place by his side, he said: "Now, my lord, wish to be transported to your own room in the khan." Prince Ali formulated the wish in his mind and, before he had time to speak a word of parting to the merchant who had so civilly entreated him, found himself transported, without shock or discomfort, to the centre of his own apartment. Nor could he tell whether he had flown through the air or gone beneath the ground. The broker sat beside him, wearing a satisfied smile.

Being thoroughly convinced of the carpet's power, the prince said to his slave: "Give this excellent fellow forty purses of a thousand dinars and, into

his other hand, a purse of a thousand." The slave obeyed; and the broker, after wishing that the purchase might bring luck, went upon his way.

Prince Ali was delighted to think that he had found so extraordinary a marvel in so short a time. "By the mercy of Allah I have attained my goal already," he said to himself, "Now I know that I shall vanquish my brothers and marry Nurennahar. My father will be overjoyed when he makes trial of this carpet. Surely my brothers cannot find anything near so wonderful. . . . But why should I not return at once, since distance is no object to me?" Then he remembered that he had agreed with his brothers to meet them in a year's time at the khan, so, not wishing to wait for many months in that forsaken place, he preferred to distract himself in the admirable land of India. On the next day he took a second walk throughout the city.

Among other curious wonders of that land, he saw a temple filled with brass idols, having a dome fifty cubits high which bore three levels of pictures in coloured carving. The whole temple was ornamented with shallow-cut designs of cunning chisels, and stood in a mighty rose garden. But its principal wonder was a solid gold statue among those brass idols (may they be damned and broken!). This figure stood at a man's height and had eyes of moving rubies, which rolled incessantly to follow the movements of any who stood before it. The priests celebrated their unbelieving cult morning and evening, and the ceremony was followed by games, music, buffoonery, feasting, and the dancing of women. These priests had no stipend and lived entirely on the gifts of pilgrims, who thronged daily to their temple from distant lands.

While he was in Bishangar, Prince Ali was present

at the great annual feast, which is presided over by the walis of all the provinces, by the captains of the army, and by the Brahmins, for that is the name given to the priests of the idols. The people thronged in their thousands into a vast plain, which was overlooked by a very high tower prepared for the reception of the king and his court. This tower was held up by eighty pillars and painted outside with presentations of birds and animals, flies and gnats. Near it there were three or four broad stands for the common people; and these were so constructed that they could face in any direction and change their decoration every hour. The entertainment began with clever juggling and sleight of hand, and dances by fakirs. Then a thousand elephants advanced in battle order, each bearing a square tower of gold wood, filled with jesters and musicians. The trunks and ears of these elephants were painted with vermilion and cinnabar, their tusks were gilt all over, and their bodies were tinted in bright colours with a grotesque contortion of whirling arms and legs. When the troop had drawn up in a straight line facing the spectators, two much greater elephants, without towers, came forward and stood in the circle formed by the stands.

One of them began dancing to the sound of music, sometimes on his hind and sometimes on his front legs; then he climbed with great agility to the top of a post and, standing with all four legs drawn together, beat his trunk and wagged his ears to the rhythm of the players; while the other elephant swung on the end of a second pole, placed horizontally across a support, and, being balanced by a great stone at the opposite end of the pole, see-sawed up and down in time to the music.

With such shows and other delights Prince Ali

passed his time, until the torment of his love for Nur-ennahar could be combated no longer. Though the year was not over, he took his slave upon the magic carpet and wished himself before the khan at the meeting of the three roads. When he opened his eyes, which he had shut in order to concentrate his mind, he found himself outside the khan. He secured quarters there and set himself to wait for his brothers. So much for him.

The second brother, Prince Hassan, soon met with a caravan going towards Persia. This he joined and, after much weary travel over plain and desert, meadow and mountain, came to the city of Shiraz. He took lodging at the chief khan and, on the following morning, while his friends the merchants were opening their bales and setting out their merchandise, went forth to view the city. He made his way to the market, which is called the Bazistan, and walked marveling among the fine display of carpets and brocaded silks. The place was packed with brokers, busily pushing their wares, and among them Hassan saw a venerable man walking slowly and gravely, not thrusting and shouting like the others, but holding an ivory tube in his hand as if it had been a king's sceptre.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Eight-hundred-and-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"THAT BROKER INSPIRES my confidence," said Prince Hassan, and he walked towards him, meaning to beg

for a closer sight of the tube; but before he could reach him, the man began proclaiming in a proud magnificent voice: "A bargain, a bargain, O buyers! Thirty thousand dinars for this ivory tube! The maker is dead and there will never be another! Thirty thousand dinars for this ivory tube! A bargain, a bargain. O buyers!"

The prince recoiled in astonishment, and said to the owner of a neighbouring shop: "Can you tell me whether this broker is sane, mad, or jesting, my master?" "He is the most honest and the most wise of all our brokers," answered the man, "We all employ him for important business. I can answer for his sanity, unless he has lost it since this morning. As he is crying that ivory tube for thirty thousand dinars it must be worth at least that, though its value is not patent. I will call the man if you wish and question him. Come into my shop and rest yourself."

Hassan sat down in the shop and the merchant called to the broker, saying: "This honourable stranger is surprised that you should ask thirty thousand dinars for a little ivory tube; and I, though I know your probity, am surprised too. Can you explain?" The broker turned to the prince, saying: "I can understand your astonishment, my master; but, when you have seen, you will doubt me no longer. Also, I may tell you that, though I have opened the sale at thirty thousand dinars, I am not allowed to sell for less than forty thousand down." Then said Prince Hassan: "I am ready to believe that it is worth the money, if you assure me that it has some hidden virtue." "You notice that one end is fitted with a crystal," replied the broker, "A man who looks through that, sees all he wishes to see." "If you speak truth," cried the prince, "I will not only pay

your price, but give you a commission of a thousand dinars. Let me look!" The broker handed him the tube and Hassan gazed through the crystal, while he wished fervently to behold the Princess Nurennahar. Immediately he saw her sitting among her slaves in the bath of the hammam, laughing, playing with the water, and glancing into a mirror. Seeing her so near and fair, the prince uttered a cry and nearly dropped the magic ivory.

Being sure that no greater marvel could be found in a ten year's search, he hastily led the broker to the khan and paid him over the price and commission which he had promised.

To while away the time until he might meet and astonish his brothers, he spent his days with the poets of that city and learnt several of the most beautiful Persian compositions by heart. But when the caravan which had brought him there was about to return, he rejoined it and soon arrived without accident at the khan of meeting. There he stayed with his brother to await the coming of Husseyn. So much for him.

Prince Husseyn, the youngest of the three brothers, journeyed without accident to the city of Samarkand Al-Ajam, where, O auspicious king, your glorious brother, Shahzarman, reigns today. On the morning of his arrival he visited the market, which is there called the Bazar, and, while watching the stream of the people, saw a broker carrying an apple in his hand. This apple, which was as large as a melon, was red on one side and gold on the other. Husseyn was taken with its beauty, and asked the broker its price. "I have opened the sale at thirty thousand dinars," the broker said, "but I am not allowed to sell for less than forty thousand down." "It certainly is the finest apple that I have ever seen," cried Husseyn, "but I

think that you must be jesting about the price." "Not at all, my lord," replied the man, "the price falls far short of the value. For this apple's appearance is as nothing to its smell, and its smell as nothing to its virtue for the good of mankind." "Let me smell it then," answered Husseyn, "afterwards you can tell me of its virtue." The broker held the apple under the prince's nose and the youth, having breathed in its suave and penetrating odour, cried aloud: "As Allah lives, all the weariness of my journey has departed! It is as if I had been born again!" Then said the broker: "Now that you have tried a little of its power, you will be more ready to hear the truth about this apple. It is not a natural fruit, but was made by the hand of man; it was born, not of a blind tree, but of the study and vigil of a great philosopher. He passed his long life in learning the curative properties of all plants and minerals, and, as a last triumph, mingled his knowledge and the life-giving simples of the world in this one apple. There is no disease, whether it be plague, purple fever, leprosy, or the awful coming of death himself, which cannot be cured by smelling at the fruit. As complete proof of what I say, I should like some incurable person to be cured before your eyes. In the meanwhile, the greater part of these merchants will bear witness to what I say and confess that they owe to this apple the fact that they are still alive."

Many people had paused while the broker was speaking; now they cried: "As Allah lives, all that is true! It is the queen of apples and the universal remedy of time!" As if to confirm what they were saying, a blind and paralytic old man was borne past in a basket on the back of a porter. The broker took a step forward and held the apple beneath the nose

of the motionless figure; immediately the old man rose in the basket and, leaping over the porter's head like a young cat, ran swiftly away, turning the eyes of youth to right and left.

Being now convinced that the apple was miraculous, Prince Husseyn led the broker to his khan and paid him forty thousand dinars for the fruit and a thousand as commission for himself. Quite certain of a triumph over his brothers, he waited patiently until a caravan was ready to depart in the direction of his home. When it set forth, he travelled with it and came without accident to the khan at the meeting of the three roads.

The three princes embraced each other tenderly and sat down together to meat.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Eight-hundred-and-tenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN THEY HAD eaten, they agreed together to display the marvels which they had found, in order to form some idea of their father's preference.

The eldest displayed his carpet and, after remarking upon its common and lustreless appearance, told them how it had borne him in the twinkling of an eye from Bishangar to that place. As a proof of his words, he bade them sit upon it and took them to a spot at the other end of the world.

In less than a moment they were back again, and Prince Hassan showed the ivory tube. As a proof of

its power, he held the crystal to his eye, saying: "O magic ivory, I wish to see the Princess Nurennahar." Even as he spoke, his face changed colour; when his brothers questioned him concerning his anxiety, he cried: "There is no power or might save in Allah! O brothers we have journeyed in vain, for our sweet cousin lies upon her bed among her weeping women and death is very near. See for yourselves!" Ali looked through the crystal and groaned, but Husseyn looked and laughed, saying: "Do not be concerned, my brothers. Though our cousin is very ill this apple will cure her. Nay, were she dead, I believe it would bring her up living from the tomb." He told the story of the magic fruit in a few words, and Ali cried: "Let us make all haste to the palace upon my carpet; then you can try the saving virtue of your apple."

The three princes bade their slaves go forward on horseback and, seating themselves on the carpet, wished to be transported to the death chamber of the princess.

In a flash of time they found themselves seated near the bed and circled by frightened screaming women. The eunuchs did not recognise them at first and were about to fall upon them, when Husseyn rose and showed his face. He leaned over the bed where the princess lay in agony and held the apple to her nostrils. She opened her eyes and sat up, smiling upon her cousins and congratulating them on their safe return. She gave them her hand to kiss and, hearing how Hassan had seen her, Ali had come to her, and Husseyn had cured her, thanked Husseyn most, but all most cordially.

As she was anxious to rise and dress, her cousins left her and presented themselves before their father. The sultan had already heard of their strange arrival

and of the princess's cure; so, after he had embraced them with great love, he gave them leave to show him the rarities which they had brought.

But when he had seen each magic thing and had listened carefully to an account of its power, he was perplexed, and said: "My sons, you have given me a difficult and delicate problem. In the justice of my mind, I cannot but hold these three rarities of equal value; for the magic ivory learned of the princess's illness, the magic carpet hastened to her, and the magic apple cured her; yet each would have been useless without the other. My choice is even more embarrassed now than it was before you left. There is no other way for it; I must set you another test. Let each of you join me at once in the polo ground beyond the city, and bring a bow and arrow with him. He whose arrow is found to have gone the furthest shall marry Nurennahar."

The three princes went off to fetch their arms, while the sultan rode to the polo ground, accompanied by a troop of officers from the palace. When his sons arrived, the sultan bade them shoot in order of age. Ali bent his bow and his arrow sped far; but when Hassan shot, his arrow fell further. Husseyn fired last and watchers, who had been placed to follow the flight of the arrows, could not find his shaft, though they searched diligently.

The sultan then addressed the princes, saying: "My sons, the matter is decided. Though it would appear that Husseyn shot furthest, you will remember that my words were: 'He whose arrow is found' . . . therefore I declare that Hassan wins the princess. It is his destiny."

On his return to the city the sultan gave immediate orders for a splendid festival to be prepared, and, in

a few days, Hassan was magnificently married to Nurennahar. So much for them.

Urged by his hopeless passion for the princess, Ali refused to be present at the marriage and, after publicly renouncing his claim to the succession of the throne, dressed himself as a dervish and placed himself under the spiritual direction of a saintly old man, who taught the example of life in a far solitude. So much for him.

Prince Husseyn, whose arrow had been lost to view . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Eight-hundred-and-eleventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

PRINCE HUSSEYN, WHOSE arrow had been lost to view, followed his eldest brother's example by abstaining from the feast, but had no thought of giving up the world. Instead, he resolved to prove that he had been cheated out of his prize and, in order to do so, began to search for his arrow. Walking out from the polo ground, he followed the direction which his shaft had taken and went straight forward for an hour, casting glances to right and left. Though in this time he saw no sign of the arrow, he refused to be discouraged and continued in the same direction until his way was barred by a pile of rocks. Considering that, if the arrow were anywhere, it would be near him, since it could not have passed through the rocks, he began searching in a circle and soon found the shaft, not stuck in the earth, but lying flat with its

point forward. "This is a miracle of Allah!" he cried, "No man in the world could shoot so far! And my arrow must still have been going bravely, since it had the strength to rebound so far. Surely I have stumbled upon a mystery!"

He picked up his arrow and was examining the broad face of the nearest rock for a trace of its impact, when he perceived the outline of a door masked in the solid stone. He gave it a careless push, hardly expecting it to open, and it swung back as if on new greased hinges. Without thinking what he did, Husseyn stepped through the opening and found himself in a gently sloping gallery; also, as soon as he had crossed the threshold, the door shut of its own accord and all his efforts to open it from the inside only resulted in the breaking of his nails.

As he was a brave youth, he strode forward in the gross darkness, following the fall of the gallery, and presently saw light ahead of him. A few more paces brought him out into the open air and he found himself on the border of a grassy plain, in the middle of which stood a palace of strange magnificence. As he looked, a lady came out of the palace followed by a group of damsels; and he was sure, from her queenly carriage and perfect beauty, that she was the mistress and those the slaves. She was dressed in dim fairy silks and her hair fell to her heels in one dark cataract. As she approached, she stretched forth her hand to the youth, and said kindly: "Be very welcome, O Prince Husseyn!"

The prince, who had bowed low as the lady approached, straightened himself in astonishment when he heard himself addressed by name; he was about to speak, but she prevented him, saying: "Do not question me now. I will satisfy your curiosity when we

are seated in my palace." She took his hand with a smile and led him through alleys to a reception hall beyond the garden's marble portico. She sat beside him on a couch, and said, still clasping his hand: "Charming Prince Husseyn, I have known you since your birth, I have smiled above your cradle, I am a princess of the Jinn, and my destiny is twined with yours. I caused the magic apple to be sold in Samarkand, the carpet in Bishangar, the ivory tube in Shiraz. I tell you this that you may realise my knowledge of you to be complete. As my fate and yours are mingled, I have judged you worthy of a nobler wife than your cousin. For that reason, I made your arrow invisible and caused it to fall among the rocks, that you might follow it and come to me. Happiness is within your grasp, if you have a mind to clutch it."

The fair immortal spoke with great tenderness and, when she had finished, lowered her eyelids on her mantling cheeks. Then Husseyn, who already realised that this girl surpassed Nurennahar in face and form, intelligence and riches, bowed before her, saying: "Princess of the Jinn, queen of my captive soul, a human such as I can hardly control his thoughts in your presence. How can so sweet an Ifrita leave the invisible kings and love a human? If you have quarrelled with your parents and are receiving me in order to pique them, I pray you let me know, for I would not cause you a moment's discomfort." Here Prince Husseyn bowed again and kissed the Jinnia's robe; but she raised him, saying: "I am my own mistress, Husseyn; I allow no spirit of earth or air to check me in what I do. Do you wish to marry me and love me?" "Do I wish?" echoed Prince Husseyn, "I would give my life for one day in your presence, not

as a husband only, but even as a slave!" He threw himself at the girl's feet and she raised him a second time, saying: "Then I accept your suit, and we are wed. Now let us take our first repast together, for you must be hungry."

She led him into a second hall, lighted by an infinity of candles perfumed with amber and arranged in patterns of symmetry. To the sound of women's voices singing in the air about them, they sat down before gold dishes and such meats as would snare the hearts of mortal men. The lovely Jinnia chose out delicacies and offered them to her husband in her own fingers, and the youth, though still bewildered, gave all his senses to the meat and fruit and wine.

When the repast was over, the princess led Husseyn into a third hall, which was loftier than the other two; and they sat among cushions worked with large flowers in bright colours. Immortal dancers came to the sound of unseen music and danced before them as light as birds. Then, at a sign from the princess, they drifted, like fluttering scarves, up a staircasé of jasper and, leading the way for the married, left them to sleep in a chamber where the bridal bed had been made for them with tinted silks.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Eight-hundred-and-twelfth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IN GRACE, delicacy and refinement, a mortal princess is to a daughter of a Jinn as a lumbering elephant

to a soaring bulbul. Husseyn was enchanted and enthralled by his bride. He gave thanks for the destiny which had led his feet in such a pleasant way. His wedding night was a golden rapture of pure delight and as the days passed by his love grew greater with possession and he found that his bride had ever some new charm to offer him.

But at the end of six months the prince felt a strong desire to see his father again, for he loved him greatly and feared that the old man would be mourning for his absence. At first his wife was afraid that he was making a pretext to abandon her; but he gave her such proofs of his valiant passion and spoke of his father with such eloquent tenderness, that at last she said: "Dear love, if I only listened to my heart, I could never let you go, even for a day, even for an hour; but my soul tells me that our love is a strong chain. I therefore make no further difficulty." "Woman of beauty," replied Prince Husseyn, "I swear by your head, which is the most treasured thing in all the world, that I will only take the time to go and return. Calm your dear spirit and refresh your eyes, for, if I think of you all the time, Allah will surely allow no evil to befall me."

The Jinnia wept, but said: "Go then, in Allah's name, dear love, and be careful not to tell your father or your brothers that you are married to a daughter of the Jinn. Keep secret the place of our abiding and the road which leads to it: tell them that you are in all things happy."

The Jinnia gave Husseyn twenty well-armed riders as a guard, and had a horse led forth for him of finer mettle than is known in the stables of the world. The prince kissed his wife and, going up to that handsome

trembling steed, flattered him with his hand, spoke in his ear, and leaped into the saddle. Then he rode forward with his train, followed by the admiring glances of his wife.

The way was not long, and the prince soon reached the gate of his father's city. The people recognised him and followed him with joyful acclamation to the sultan's palace. His father wept with joy on beholding him; he embraced him and chid him gently for the long anxiety of his absence. "I thought I would never see you again," he said, "I feared that your disappointment had driven you to some rash act." "Indeed, dear father," answered Husseyn, "the loss of the princess was bitter to me, for love is a tree which cannot be uprooted in a moment." Then he told his father of the search for the arrow; but would reveal nothing beyond the point of his coming to the barrier of rocks. "I can only say, my father," he concluded, "that I have now forgotten Nurennahar and all my troubles. Life has opened fair and sweet before me; its one shadow has been that you might grieve for me."

"No father could ask more for his son than happiness," answered the king, "I should have liked to have you by me until my death, but it seems that this may not be." "I promise to visit you so often, my father, that you will grow wearied of my coming," cried the prince. "That is well, my child," said the sultan, "but how may I send to ask news of you?" "I may not give you a direction for sending," answered Husseyn, "for that is part of the mystery of an oath which I have sworn. But you may be certain that I am in all things happy; and I swear that I will visit you once a month." Prince Husseyn stayed three days with his father in the palace and, on the

morning of the fourth day, took leave of him and departed at the head of his escort.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Eight-hundred-and-thirteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE LOVELY JINNIA, who had not expected him to return so quickly, received him with infinite joy; and they celebrated their re-union with an agreeable diversity of the modes of love.

In the days which followed, the Jinnia introduced continual variation into the life of that enchanted place: she found for her husband new fashions of taking the air, of walking, eating, drinking, dancing, and singing; of music, poetry, and the perfume of roses; fresh ways of decking themselves with flowers, plucking ripe fruits from the branches, and playing the game of lovers, which is a more subtle game than chess, and played with bed for board.

After a month of these delights Prince Husseyn was obliged, by his oath to his father, to ride forth again at the head of his escort.

Now, during Husseyn's last absence from his father's court, certain favourite counsellors, dismayed by his rich seeming while he had made his first visit, abused the liberty of free speech and poured poison in the king's ear. "It seems to us," they said, "only prudent that your majesty should find out the palace of your son's retreat. Surely the prince only paraded his wealth in the palace to show that he was independ-

ent of his father and could still live royally after he had cast off his allegiance. Soon he will be making himself a party among your subjects, to dethrone our sultan and usurp his empire."

Though he was disturbed by their words, the sultan would not admit that his favourite son was capable of such a plot, and he answered his counsellors severely: "O tongues of venom, do you not know that my son Husseyn loves me and that I have never tried his fidelity by a single harshness?" Then said the chief of the favourites: "O king of time, do you think that he has so easily forgotten your decision in regard to our princess? He did not take the matter well; he did not follow his eldest brother in a renunciation of the world. Also did you not notice that his men were as fresh and untouched by dust when they arrived as if they had but walked out of their own doors; and that their horses were as glossy and unbreathed as if they were returning from a simple canter? Surely it is clear that Prince Husseyn has some secret abode near your capital, from which he intends to foment trouble among the people. We would have been lacking in our duty if we had not touched upon this delicate affair; we beseech you to have a care for your own preservation and the good of your loyal subjects."

"I do not know what to believe and what not to believe," replied the sultan, "I am obliged to you for your advice; and will keep my eyes open in the future." He dismissed these malicious favourites, without showing how far their words had gained upon him, and made up his mind that, when he had regarded his son's words and actions more closely, he would either reward the busybodies or utterly confound them.

When the prince came, the sultan received him with the same joy as before, and showed no sign of suspicion; but, on the following morning, he called to him a certain old woman who was famous about the palace both for malice and sorcery, and who could have unravelled a spider's web without breaking a single filament. "Mother of benediction," he said to her, "the time has come for you to prove your devotion to the throne. Since my son Husseyn has returned to me I have not been able to learn from him the place of his present dwelling. As I do not wish to push my authority, I require you to obtain that information for me secretly. My son sets out again tomorrow at dawn and I suggest that you lie in wait for him near that tumble of rocks which bounds the plain to the east. For he tells me that he found his destiny where he found his arrow." The old sorceress bowed low and, going forth to the rocks immediately, hid herself in a place of vantage.

Next morning Prince Husseyn left the palace at the first show of light in order not to attract undue attention in the streets. Soon he came with his escort to the door in the rock and, greatly to the amazement of the old watcher, passed through it and disappeared.

The hag ran to the place where she had seen horses and riders vanish, but could find no trace of a door; for the entrance was only visible to men who might please the Jinnia; from women, and especially from old and horrible women, it was entirely hidden. The sorceress gave vent to her rage in a sounding fart, which raised a storm of dust and lifted the smaller rocks into the air; then she returned to the king and told him what she had seen. "O sultan of time, I will do better on the next occasion," she said, "I only beg you not to ask what steps I intend to take." "Use

what means you will," cried the sultan, "Depart under the keeping of Allah, and I will wait your news impatiently." He gave her a magnificent diamond, as an earnest of greater rewards to follow, and she departed about her business.

A month later, Prince Husseyn came out through the door in the rock with his twenty horsemen and, as he picked his way among the boulders, beheld a poor old woman, moaning upon the ground and writhing as if in agony. Her tears and rags appealed to the prince's compassion, so he reined in his horse, and asked the woman what he might do for her relief. Without raising her head, the sorceress answered in a whisper: "Lord of my help, Allah has sent you that I may not die unburied. Alas, alas, I feel my soul slipping away. I left my village this morning to go to the city, but lo! I was taken with a red fever which has cast me down to perish among these rocks." But Prince Husseyn cheered her, saying: "Good aunt, if you will allow two of my men to carry you, I will return with you to my dwelling and have you well looked after." As the old woman made no difficulty, two of the escort lifted her from the ground and followed their master, who had already returned through the secret door in the rock.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Eight-hundred-and-fourteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SEEING THE RIDERS return, the Jinnia hastened forth to meet her husband. He showed her the old woman,

who lay back looking very ill in the arms of two of the escort, and said: "Dear queen, Allah set this suffering old woman upon our road; I recommend her to your kindness and skill." The princess gave the sorceress a searching glance and then handed her over to her women, bidding them care for her and show her all respect. Then she turned to her husband, and said in a low voice: "Allah will reward you for your good intention. But you need have no fear for this old woman; for she is no more ill than I am. I know why she was sent here and I know by whom; but you may rest assured that none can plot against you in evil without my knowing and flying to your rescue. Now go forth again under the protection of Allah!" Husseyn, who had grown used by this time not to question his wife too closely, kissed her again and departed for his father's capital, where he arrived without adventure. The king received him as usual and gave no hint in his greeting that anyone had striven to sow suspicion between them.

The old sorceress was taken to a fair apartment in the palace, laid to rest on a mattress of embroidered satin, and covered first with fine silks and then with heavy cloth of gold. One of the women prepared her a glass of water from the Fountain of Lions and gave it to her, saying: "This water cures all disease and can give health to the dying." The old woman drank the draught and, after waiting for a few moments, cried: "An admirable elixir! I am cured as if my disease had been drawn forth with pincers! Lead me to your mistress quickly that I may thank her for her goodness." The old deceiver rose up and allowed herself to be led through hall after hall of great magnificence, until she appeared before the throne itself.

This throne was of solid gold, mooned with emer-

alds, and the lovely Jinnia sat upon it, robed in the stuff of dreams. The old woman, dazzled by what she saw, fell babbling thanks before the throne's foot. "I am delighted to hear of your cure," said the Jinnia kindly, "I give you leave to stay in the palace for as long as you wish; my women will show you round." The sorceress kissed the earth and then followed two of the queen's young girls, who displayed all the marvels of the palace to her attentive gaze. When she had seen all, she begged leave to retire, so the women led her outside the door in the rock and wished her well. As soon as they were out of sight, she hurried back to mark the place of the door, but it had disappeared.

When she came to the city, she told the sultan all that she had seen and assured him that it would be impossible for any human to find the entrance to the palace. The sultan called his wazirs and favourite counsellors and, after repeating the tale to them, asked for their advice. Some said that Prince Husseyn should be put to death, others that he should be imprisoned for life; but the sorceress begged leave to speak, and said: "O king of time, I think that the best plan of all would be to take advantage of your son's pretence of filial affection to obtain for yourself some of the marvels which I saw in such profusion at his palace. If he consents you will be incalculably richer, if he refuses it will not be too late to take the harsher advice of your counsellors." "Be it so," answered the king; and straightway sent for Husseyn. "My son," said he, "now that you are richer and more powerful than your poor old father, can you not bring me some little present on your next visit; perhaps a tent which I may use when I am out hunting or go to the wars?" Prince Husseyn agreed most

readily to this suggestion, and assured him that he would joyfully make greater gifts than that.

When Husseyn reached the fairy palace again, he told his wife of his father's wish. "As Allah lives, I am sorry that he only asks for such a trifle," answered the Jinnia. Then she called her treasurer, saying: "Take forth the greatest tent which I have in my treasure, and tell Shaïba to bring it to me."

A few minutes later the treasurer returned with the treasure's guardian, a Jinni of unusual and terrifying aspect. He was a foot and a half in height and had a beard thirty feet long; his moustache was twisted up to his ears and his pig's eyes were deeply sunk in a head larger than his body. Over his right shoulder he carried a bar of iron, five times as heavy as himself, and in the palm of his left hand he bore a small folded packet. When this creature appeared, the Jinnia addressed him, saying: "O Shaïba, you will accompany my husband, Prince Husseyn, to his father's palace. And when you get there you will do your duty." Shaïba bowed, and asked: "Shall I take the tent with me, dear mistress?" "Certainly," she replied, "But, first, set it up here that our lord may see it." Shaïba went out into the garden and unfolded the little packet which he carried; from it he drew a pavilion which could have shaded a whole army, and whose peculiar property it was to shrink or swell at need. When he had showed off this marvel to the prince, he refolded it and cried: "Now for the sultan!"

The people of the city saw Prince Husseyn enter the city and, at the sight of the immortal dwarf who swaggered in beside him, making play with his iron bar, ran with affrighted cries into their houses. When the two reached the palace, the eunuchs and the

guards fled in terror before them, so that they entered the presence unannounced. The sultan sat talking with the sorceress, in the midst of his favourite counsellors. As soon as Prince Husseyn had greeted his father, Shaïba advanced to the foot of the throne and cried: "O king of time, I have brought you the pavilion!" Then, retiring a few paces, he unwrapped the mighty tent from its small covering and set it up, quite little, before him on the floor. From its shelter he suddenly hurled his iron bar at the head of the grand-wazir, stunning him and bringing him to the ground. Then, with the quickness of an eel, he skipped in and out among the counsellors until he had dealt a blow at each; and only the king, the prince, and the sorceress remained upright. The dwarf turned next to the old woman, crying: "I have a better cure than Lion water for such as you!" and brought his weapon down upon her head. After this he shouldered the bar, and spoke to the king: "I have punished these for their evil counsel; I spare you because you are weak and not wicked. But, as you lent a foolish ear to slander, I deprive you of your throne. If there is anyone in this great city who cares to protest, I shall be glad to answer him with my bar. Indeed, I am quite prepared to convince the whole city, if she does not open her arms to my young master. Now depart quickly, O you who were king, for this iron is heavy and might fall." At this hint the old king scuttled down from the throne and, fleeing from the palace, joined his son Ali in the far retreat of his holy master.

As Prince Hassan and his wife Nurennahar had taken no part in the conspiracy, Prince Husseyn, now king of that city, gave them the finest province of his empire, and lived at cordial peace with them. The

lovely Jinnia lived for uncounted prosperous years with her sweet lord, and left behind a numerous posterity. But Allah knows all!

When she had made an end of this tale, Shahrazade fell silent, and little Doniazade said: "Dear sister, that was indeed a delectable story!" "But it is nothing," answered Shahrazade with a smile, "to a tale which I have kept in reserve." "You have our leave to tell it," said King Shahryar.

So SHAHRAZADE SAID: